CLARENTINE.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

CLARENTINE.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE entire and unexpected acquittal that terminated Lady Delmington's letter, afflicting as was its general tenour, proved to Clarentine a ſource of alleviation the moſt chearing, and the moſt grateful. Her heart, lightened of the heavy weight that had oppreſſed and ſunk it, whilſt labouring beneath unmerited obloquy, now glowed with ſenſations of affection and delight; and aſſured that wherever ſhe went, the eſteem and good wiſhes of her friends would follow her, ſhe ſummoned all her reſolution to her aid, in order to accompliſh the taſk aſſigned her, with chearfulneſs and reſignation.

Her letter to Mr. Lenham was natural and reſpectful. She began by apologizing, after ſo many years abſence, after ſo long and mutual a ſilence, for venturing to recall to his memory an object that muſt be ſo nearly obliterated from it; and then, as a ſtill further excuſe for the liberty ſhe was taking, made uſe of the name of Mr. Somerſet, and related in ſimple and plain terms the flattering encouragement he had given her to apply to Mr. Lenham for protection and countenance, ſhould any unforeſeen event ever lay her under the neceſſity of quitting Delmington Houſe. Such an event, ſhe added, *had* now occurred; and it was the wiſh of Lady Delmington herſelf, that ſhe ſhould hazard the application with which ſhe was about to trouble him.

Proceeding after this to ſtate the nature of that application more at large, ſhe hinted next, as delicately as ſhe could, the terms upon which, alone, Lady Delmington had emboldened her to make ſuch a requeſt; and concluded by entreating, that whenever he favoured her with an anſwer, he would be as clear and explicit upon that article as poſſible.

Having directed and ſent off this letter, ſhe would by the ſame poſt have written again to Sophia: but apprehenſive that Lady Delmington might diſapprove her taking too frequent advantage of the permiſſion ſhe had granted her to continue the correſpondence, ſhe compelled herſelf to remain ſilent till ſhe heard from Mr. Lenham, anxious as ſhe was to prove, how little reality there was, in the idea her Ladyſhip ſeemed to entertain of her having conceived a ſtronger degree of affection for Sir Edgar, than ſhe had hitherto avowed.

Nothing, in truth, could be more ill-grounded than this charge. That Clarentine loved him, in remembrance of the early friendſhip of their childhood, was fully ſenſible of the goodneſs of his heart, and did ample juſtice to his talents and his converſation, ſhe wiſhed not to diſown: but that ſhe now felt, or ever had experienced for him, that ſpecies of preference Lady Delmington, in one part of her letter, imputed to her, ſhe found herſelf ready, in the face of heaven, to deny! Nor did ſhe think there was any merit in having thus withſtood him; ſince

Edgar, warmly as he had lately ſhewn himſelf attached to her, had never before given her any reaſon to believe him ſo partial: but on the contrary, by his extreme verſatility, and inexplicable inconſiſtencies, had often led her to ſuſpect he was actually playing a part for his own private amuſement, whenever he ſhewed himſelf more attentive to her than uſual. Above all diſguiſe herſelf, inexperienced, and diffident of her own powers of attraction, it had not once occurred to her that it was poſſible any human being could endure a ſtate of ſuch perpetual anxiety, and undergo ſo long and irkſome a reſtraint, merely from motives of concealed affection for her. As he had now, however, entered upon her juſtification, and made ſo honourable a report in her favour, ſhe hoped, ſhould the ſubject be again revived, he would likewiſe undeceive his family with regard to her knowledge of, or participation in his ſentiments.

Whilſt theſe reflections occupied her mind, as ſhe ſat near the window at which ſhe had been writing, a ſcene caught her attention from the road, which effectually baniſhed every remembrance of her own concerns,

concerns, and left her only ſenſible to emotions of compaſſion and terror.

A lady and gentleman, driving paſt in a curricle, and followed by a ſervant and a child on horſeback, had been ſtopped, at the moment of Clarentine's looking up, by the cries of their little companion, whoſe horſe trotting unguardedly on, had ſtumbled within twenty yards of the farm houſe, and with ſome violence thrown her to the ground.

She was inſtantly raiſed, and carried to a bank by the ſide of the road, where the lady, who had already alighted, was ſupporting and ſoothing her, when Clarentine, breathleſs with eagerneſs, ran out to offer her ſervices, and to entreat the little ſufferer might be carried into the houſe, till it was known whether ſhe had not received any injury that required immediate attention.

The lady, ſtruck by her appearance, and the benevolent earneſtneſs with which ſhe ſpoke, looked up at her with extreme ſurpriſe, and after a moment's heſitation, thanked her for the offer, and riſing with the child in her arms, prepared, as well as the gentleman who had driven

her, to follow whither ſhe choſe to lead.

On their entrance into the houſe they were met by Madame d'Arzele, who from her own window, which was juſt over that of Clarentine, having likewiſe beheld the whole tranſaction, was now on the point of ruſhing out with the ſame friendly intentions.

She hurried them all into the parlour; and then, ſending for her maid, an experienced attendant upon children, recourſe was had to the common application made uſe of upon ſuch occaſions; and in a ſhort time the little girl, being but very ſlightly hurt, ſmiled upon her new friends with affectionate gladneſs, and with far more ſenſibility than could have been expected from her age, gratefully repeated to them the thanks and apologies the lady dictated to her.

As the two ſtrangers both ſpoke French very fluently, and ſeemed particularly charmed by the manners and converſation of Madame d'Arzele, to whom Clarentine willingly reſigned the taſk of entertaining them, it was with evident reluctance they at length roſe to depart.

At

At the door, whither Clarentine attended them, they entreated permiſſion to call again; and the lady informing her of her name and abode, added, that before ſhe and her friend left Sidmouth, ſhe ſhould likewiſe hope for the honour of ſeeing them at her own lodging.

Clarentine curtſying in ſilence, took the direction that was offered her, and the next minute, the curricle being brought to the door, they lifted the intereſting little girl into it, and placing themſelves on each ſide her, drove her away.

"Eh bien," cried Madame d'Arzele, when Clarentine went back to her, "comment trouvez-vous notre inconnue? Elle a un petit *minois de fantaiſie* qui me plait beaucoup; et en converſation, piquante et enjouée me paroit remplie d'eſprit et d'agrément."*

Clarentine ſmiled, and anſwered, "If I honeſtly confeſs, that I was more ſtruck by the expreſſion of ſincerity and goodneſs that marked the countenance of the gentleman, than by the ſparkling vivacity

* "Well, what is your opinion of our pretty ſtranger? Her comic little countenance pleaſed me extremely, as well as the gaiety and ſpirit of her converſation."

of his brilliant companion, what will you ſay to me?"

"That your taſte is more ſolid than my own, and that in all probability you are perfectly right: but ſhew me their card."

Clarentine did ſo, and Madame d'Arzele read aloud the names of Admiral Compton, and Mrs. Henry Hertford.

"Admiral!" repeated ſhe, "then, perhaps, Clarentine, he knows your friend Captain Somerſet!"

Clarentine ſhook her head with a look of incredulity, and the tears ſtarted into her eyes, which Madame d'Arzele obſerving, inſtantly changed the ſubject; and ſoon after they were called to dinner.

In the evening, Clarentine, who had not been out for ſome days, and was anxious, as much as poſſible, to diſſipate her mind, and drive away the melancholy ideas that perpetually obtruded themſelves, obtained Madame d'Arzele's permiſſion to take Pauline with her, and ſet out on a walk towards the ſea ſide.

Upon their arrival at the beach, not finding any company there, Clarentine ſeated

ſeated herſelf upon the edge of a ſmall boat, which had lately been drawn out of the water to undergo ſome repairs, whilſt her little friend wandering about in ſearch of ſhells and weeds, found a ſpecies of intereſt and amuſement in attending to the occupation of a party of poor fiſhermen, who, immediately oppoſite to the ſtation ſhe had choſen, were buſily employed in dragging up their nets; and whoſe diſtant voices, as they were occaſionally raiſed or depreſſed, taught her how to judge of their ſucceſs, or how to pity their diſappointment.

Whilſt engaged in this contemplation, time inſenſibly ſtole on, and the ſun had already been ſet ſome minutes before Clarentine recollected the hour, or thought of returning; riſing at length, however, and looking round for her young companion, what was her ſurpriſe to ſee her advancing with a gentleman who held her hand, and whom, as they drew nearer, ſhe diſcovered to be Mr. Eltham.

Haſtening forward the moment he caught her eye, and gaily addreſſing her—"Oh, that I were a poet," exclaimed he "to celebrate, as it deſerves,

this romantic ſcene, and the lovely ſea nymph that contributes ſo much to embelliſh it!

Clarentine, to whom, ſince ſhe was grown hopeleſs of ever reviſiting Delmington herſelf, the ſight of any one ſhe had formerly known there afforded a ſort of melancholy gratification, now beheld Mr. Eltham with more pleaſure than ſhe had ever before experienced, and ſmiling at the flightineſs with which he began the converſation, rallied him upon his unfaſhionable gallantry, and expreſſed her wonder at ſeeing him thus unexpectedly at Sidmouth.

Delighted at a reception that partook ſo little of the frigid ſolemnity that had hitherto marked her conduct towards him, and conſtruing this change into a favourable omen, Eltham, in high good humour, as they proceeded towards the farmhouſe, at which Clarentine reſided, began an account of his journey, and of the motives that had prompted him to undertake it; the principle one of which, he very ſeriouſly averred, was *ill-health*, and the great deſire he had to try ſea-bathing, and change of air!

Clarentine,

Clarentine, half tempted to laugh at an aſſertion, his looks and whole appearance ſo directly contradicted, yet judging it beſt not to betray her incredulity, compelled herſelf to expreſs ſome degree of concern upon the occaſion; and then, giving a different turn to the converſation, aſked him how long it was ſince he had ſeen any of the family at Delmington.

"I was there yeſterday," anſwered he, "and had the pleaſure of a ſhort tête-à-tête with Mrs. Harrington, by whom I was received."

"Did you ſee no one elſe? neither Lady Julia, nor Sophia?" "Oh yes; they both came down before I went away. The latter had been ſitting with her brother, who is now ſufficiently recovered to bear reading aloud, and, I believe, begins to walk about his room. I was not admitted to him of courſe: but I hear he looks extremely ill, and is low-ſpirited to a degree that renders him abſolutely nervous."

Clarentine ſighed at this melancholy information, and for ſome minutes, there was a mutual and total ſilence. Eltham,

at length, however, addreſſing her again, ſaid—

"Have you formed any acquaintance, Miſs Delmington, ſince you came here? Do you go out at all?"

"No, ſcarcely ever, unleſs it is to walk with the children."

"You know none of the people then in this neighbourhood?"

"Yes, one lady there is, whom accident introduced to us. Her name is Hertford; ſhe is a married woman, and was accompanied by a gentleman who being much older than herſelf, is probably either her uncle, or her father."

"And this gentleman," cried Eltham, with ſome earneſtneſs, "what is *he* called?"

"Compton!" anſwered Clarentine.—"Admiral Compton."—"The very woman!" exclaimed Eltham, with a wicked, though half ſuppreſſed laugh.—"Poor Harry Hertford's widow! And ſo, Miſs Delmington," continued he, "you tell me this lady is at Sidmouth? Pray, how often have you ſeen her?"

"Only once," anſwered Clarentine. "But pray tell *me* likewiſe, what you know

know about her, and why you laughed, when I ſpoke of her?"

"Aye," cried he. "Firſt, however, let me aſk, did you like her?

"That is nothing to the purpoſe," anſwered Clarentine; "if I ſay I did, it will probably prevent your giving me the account I ſolicit; and if I ſay I did *not*, it might lead you to be more ſevere than you would otherwiſe think right.—Excuſe my ſpeaking of her, therefore, at all."

"I do aſſure you," cried he, after a moment's reflection, reſuming a graver look, "theſe ſcruples are very unneceſſary. I know nothing of the lady that ought to be ſeriouſly conſtrued to her diſadvantage; and if you could tell me where ſhe lodges, I would go and pay my reſpects to her and the Admiral to-morrow."

"I have no right then," cried Clarentine, "to enquire further, nor do I mean it. Only this, Mr. Eltham, let me ſay; if you believe, or have any juſt reaſon to ſuſpect Mrs. Hertford is not in every reſpect a proper acquaintance for Madame d'Arzele, you do very wrong to deny it; ſince,

ſince, without any injury to the lady's reputation, you might put her on her guard againſt contracting an intimacy, which, at ſome future period, ſhe may have reaſon to repent: as for *me*, I ſhall not long be in any danger of meeting her; nor, if I were, do I think the world would be ſo ſevere upon me, as upon a defenceleſs young foreigner in Madame d'Arzele's ſituation, deſtitute as ſhe is of advocates, and utterly unknown as are her principles and character. Tell me therefore honeſtly, Mr. Eltham, without entering into any detail, is Mrs. Hertford ſuch a woman as, had you a ſiſter, you would introduce to that ſiſter's acquaintance?"

Eltham pauſed a moment; looked irreſolute, and embarraſſed; but at length frankly anſwered—"She is *not!*"

"Enough," cried Clarentine gratefully, "you may rely upon my diſcretion, and reſt aſſured that ſo far from ſeeking to know more, I will never mention her name to you again."

"You will oblige me," returned Eltham; "now therefore let us drop the ſubject."

Then

Then adverting to what ſhe had ſaid concerning her ſpeedy removal from Sidmouth, he enquired how ſoon ſhe purpoſed going?

"I wait," anſwered Clarentine, "for letters from town, without which I can decide nothing."

"Do you think then of fixing in London?"

"I will be plain with you, Mr. Eltham," replied Clarentine, with a good-humoured ſmile; "there is one ſubject upon which I have promiſed not to queſtion *you*, and it would oblige me particularly, were you, upon this, not to queſtion *me*."

"I am ſilenced!" cried Eltham — "Pardon a curioſity ſo unlicenced, and aſſure yourſelf, I will ſuffer it to diſtreſs you no more."

"Then all is well," ſaid Clarentine, "and as we are bound to mutual forbearance upon theſe two articles, let us endeavour to outvie each other in the ſtrictneſs with which we perform our engagements."

"Remember, however," cried Eltham, laughing, "that fair as this compact ſeems,

ſeems, mine is, by much, the hardeſt part; ſince you cannot poſſibly be ſo much intereſted upon the ſubject of Mrs. Hertford, as every man muſt be upon that of Miſs Delmington."

"If this were indeed the caſe," returned Clarentine, "ſtill, I can ſee nothing in it, that would not be perfectly juſt. Upon every occaſion the moſt difficult taſk has always been aſſigned to the man; and were you now to be exempted from this general rule, where would be the merit of adhering to your agreement?"

They had by this time reached the houſe, and Madame d'Arzele coming out to meet them, Eltham was prevented from making any reply.

That lady, though ſurpriſed as much as Clarentine had been by his unexpected appearance, received him with great politeneſs, and looked, as ſhe really felt, extremely glad to ſee him. The animation, and originality of his character, had rendered him, even upon ſo ſhort an acquaintance, a conſiderable favourite with her; and the extraordinary good breeding with which he conducted himſelf towards her, joined to a very faſcinating and elegant

gant addreſs, all conſpired to make her more partial to him, than to any of the other men ſhe had ſeen, ſince her reſidence in England. It is true, ſhe had admired the diſtinguiſhed deportment of Sir Edgar, and been ſtruck by the intelligence and expreſſion that characterized his countenance: but ignorant as ſhe was of its cauſe, the reſerve which frequently caſt a gloom over his features, and the cold gravity, that whilſt it ſeemed intended to repreſs chearfulneſs in others, appeared likewiſe to denote an unſocial and contemptuous diſpoſition in himſelf, had often diſpleaſed her extremely, and led her, very naturally, to ſuſpect him of a degree of arrogance and pride, which at every period of life would have been offenſive, but in ſo young a man, was peculiarly diſguſting. She was not aware, that what ſhe miſtook for ſupercilioufneſs, was merely the effect of inquietude; and that, had his heart been at eaſe, and all his painful diſtruſts at an end, the native ſweetneſs of his temper would have ſhone forth with luſtre, and converted into unqualified admirers, the very perſons who now ſhrunk at his approach, and dreaded the

the apprehended ſeverity of his criticiſm and his obſervation.

It being almoſt dark when Clarentine and Eltham entered, Madame d Arzele immediately called for candles; and then, having obtained his promiſe to ſpend the remainder of the evening with them, apologized for leaving the room, and went up, as was her conſtant practice, to ſee her children put to bed.

Clarentine, as ſoon as ſhe was gone, placed herſelf at the table, and began working; whilſt Eltham, converſing upon indifferent ſubjects, walked up and down the room, occaſionally ſtopping to look at the books that lay ſcattered in different parts of it, and then again proceeding forward. After ſome time, however, Clarentine finding that his perambulation had ceaſed, and that he ſtood quite ſtill near the chimney, raiſed her eyes, and ſaw him, with the moſt arch and expreſſive ſmile, holding Mrs. Hertford's card in his hand, and attentively examining it. This over, without being conſcious he had excited obſervation, he careleſsly replaced it, and reſumed his walk, ſtill wearing the ſame look of malicious ſignificancy.

For

For the contempt thus plainly manifeſted, and the ſingularity of Eltham's whole behaviour with regard to this lady, it is now time to account.

The laſt year of his being at Weſtminſter ſchool, having contracted a particular intimacy with one of the ſcholars named Godfrey, a ward of Admiral Compton's, he uſed frequently with this young man to be invited to that gentleman's houſe, and there to ſpend ſeveral days ſucceſſively. Previous to his becoming acquainted with the family, Charles Godfrey, his friend, who was two or three years older than himſelf, had conceived a violent paſſion for the Admiral's niece, Miſs Compton, who, at that time, was about twenty, and who had long clandeſtinely encouraged his love, and moſt anxiouſly ſought to heighten and encreaſe it. On the firſt introduction however of young Eltham, whether captivated by the ſuperior elegance of his perſon, or the ſtill greater ſuperiority of his fortune, is unknown; but, certain it is, ſhe inſtantly changed her plan, levelled all her powers of attraction againſt him, and by the flattering attention ſhe paid him,

him, and the condeſcending ſweetneſs of her manners, very ſoon ſucceeded in making him the ſecret rival of poor Godfrey.

Thus far, powerfully aſſiſted by her own beauty, and yet more, by the vanity and inexperience of her deluded lover, ſhe found it no very difficult taſk to perſuade him to an elopement, and accordingly, one fine moon-light night,

"When the ſweet winds did gently kiſs the trees,
"And they did make no noiſe,"

taking advantage of the abſence of her uncle, whom ſhe was afraid to truſt prematurely, but whoſe pardon ſhe had no doubt of obtaining on her return, they ſat off together for Scotland, and travelled ſome miles with uninterrupted ſpeed and facility!

Half way on their journey, however, unhappily for this enterprizing lady, Eltham's good genius, in the perſon of one of his truſtees, purſued, and overtook them; in conſequence of which, Miſs Compton and her maid were ſent back to town in the ſame chaiſe that had conveyed them from it, and the deſpairing Mr. Eltham, with his providential deliverer,

verer, took the direct road to Oxford, where he was immediately entered, and left under the care of a very rigid tutor.

During the two first years that he spent at the university, he heard very little, either of Miss Compton, or her uncle. Charles Godfrey, he learnt, was gone abroad, after every art had been unsuccessfully tried by his *quondam* mistress, in order to regain her empire over him, and to extenuate her own conduct. Since then, she had failed in several other attempts to ensure new conquests; and last of all, he was told, she had retired with a distant relation to a small house, belonging to the Admiral, near Portsmouth.

Here she became acquainted with Mr. Hertford, the elder brother of a young Lieutenant in the navy, whom he had left Oxford to pay a visit to, whilst he lay at Spithead. Eltham, who was in the same college, knew him well: but little suspecting what would be the event of his journey, and unwilling to expose either Miss Compton, or himself, he had never mentioned her to him, and saw him no more till he was actually married!

Admiral

Admiral Compton, indulgent as his niece had ſuppoſed him, and deficient as he had certainly been in early attention to her conduct, was not only extremely incenſed againſt her, on account of her elopement with Eltham, but alſo, upon occaſion of her marriage with Mr. Hertford. This young man, who was not yet of age, he knew to be the eldeſt ſon of a large family, which had been left at his father's death nearly unprovided for, and extremely dependant upon his future kindneſs. His eſtate was ſmall, though report had, to his coſt, probably made it much greater; and when it came into his poſſeſſion, the unbounded extravagance of his wife, joined to his own indolence of diſpoſition, compleated his ruin at the end of two years.

They were now obliged to ſeek a refuge abroad, till their affairs could, in ſome meaſure, be arranged. The place they fixed upon for their reſidence was Switzerland; and here, in his twenty-third year, Mr. Hertford died. Eltham, who was then on his travels, happening to be at Lauſanne when his friend was taken ill, went to ſee him; and after he was

was no more, though he did not continue viſiting his widow, aſſiſted her in a pecuniary way to a large amount, and then cancelling the bonds ſhe had given him, and encloſing them to her with a very polite note, he purſued his journey into Italy.

Eight months now elapſed, during which he heard nothing more of her. At the end of that time, being one night at a ball given by the Engliſh Ambaſſador at Naples, he unexpectedly ſaw her again, accompanied by a lady, who proved to be the ſame perſon ſhe had ſpent ſo many months with, previous to her marriage.

Leſs apprehenſive of his own credulity, however ſpecious might be her artifices, and therefore leſs inclined to avoid her, than whilſt he ſuſpected ſhe retained any power over his heart, he boldly ſtepped up to her, the moment ſhe had taken a ſeat, and concluding from her appearance in ſo gay a ſcene, it would be ſuperfluous to addreſs her in the language of condolement, or ſolemnity, he began with great gallantry, by reproaching her for ſuffering one hour to elapſe after her arrival at Naples, without ſending to inform him

where

where he might have the honour of waiting upon her; and then enquiring what ſtay ſhe purpoſed making, without waiting for an anſwer, he proteſted in the ſame breath, he had never ſeen her look ſo handſome in her life, and ſhould be utterly inconſolable unleſs ſhe ſtood up and danced with him immediately.

Such a *debut*, ſo eaſy, ſo familiar, and unceremonious, Mrs Hertford found extremely diſconcerting. Hitherto, accuſtomed only to view Eltham in the light of an ardent and ſubmiſſive lover, or of a generous, and reſpectful friend, (ſuch as he had ſhewn himſelf upon the death of her huſband,) ſhe was totally unprepared for ſo ſudden a change, and completely at a loſs how to treat him. Concluding, however, the wiſeſt policy would be to adopt his own deportment, and manners, and changing as he changed, to accommodate herſelf to the humour of the moment, her countenance brightened in an inſtant, and ſmiling upon him with the moſt facinating ſweetneſs, on his urging her again to ſtand up, ſhe gave him her hand, and readily conſented to follow him.

Mrs.

Mrs. Hertford, employing with wonderful ingenuity every art ſhe was miſtreſs of in order to pleaſe, animate, and entertain her too-preſuming partner, ſucceeded, once again, before the evening was over, in completely turning his head; he forgot the unfavourable opinion he had lately harboured of her—forgot every impropriety of her paſt conduct, and ſenſible only to her allurements, her beauty, the ſallies of her wit, and the vivacity of her converſation, he went home fully perſuaded he had cruelly injured her, and more paſſionately in love than ever.

Early the following morning, he repaired to her houſe; ſhe refuſed ſeeing him till evening; but to ſoften this ſeverity, ſent Mrs. Caſtleton, the lady who lived with her, down to him, to ſay, that nothing but indiſpoſition, the conſequence of her laſt night's fatigue, ſhould have prevented her admitting him, the moment his name was announced.

Thus irritating his impatience to ſee her, by delay; and at the ſame time alarming him, by a falſe report of her illneſs, Eltham took his leave, determined, when the evening came, to give up every other

engagement, and dedicate it wholly to her.

Accordingly, at the appointed hour, he again preſented himſelf at her door, and with more parade and ceremony than his impetuoſity led him to approve, was conducted through a long ſuite of apartments on the ground floor, into a very elegant ſaloon, where ſurrounded by a numerous circle, chiefly compoſed of gentlemen, he found Mrs. Hertford, converſing indiſcriminately, with equal eaſe and gaiety, with every individual of her little court, and fixing as irriſiſtably the attention, as ſhe commanded the homage of the whole room.

At once confounded and amazed at the ſight of ſo brilliant an aſſembly, after the pathetic deſcription he had heard in the morning of her languor and indiſpoſition, Eltham, with ſome indignation, ſtopped irreſolute at the entrance of the room, debating within himſelf whether he ſhould proceed or not.

Whilſt thus undetermined, however, a nod of ſalutation from Mrs. Hertford, accompanied by a moſt gracious ſmile, and a motion of the hand that invited him

to

to approach, put an immediate end to his deliberations, and induced him haſtily to advance.

As there happened at that moment to be a vacant ſeat next her, he took poſſeſſion of it, and as ſoon as the firſt compliments were over, inſtead of joining in the general converſation, employed himſelf very deliberately in ſurveying the different figures that compoſed the motly groupe around him, endeavouring by their exterior appearance to form ſome judgment of their characters and diſpoſitions.

This review, during a ſhort time, afforded him much amuſement: but not having any one near him to whom he could communicate his remarks, and finding, though there was much to ridicule, there was but little to intereſt, he ſoon grew weary of the cynical part he had choſen, and was turning to begin ſome trifling converſation with Mrs. Caſtleton, whilſt her friend was talking to a lady near her, when the door unexpectedly opened with great precipitation, and the ſervant announcing a new viſitor, whoſe name however Eltham could not diſtinctly hear, a young man of a very elegant de-

portment, made his appearance, and haſtening up to Mrs. Hertford, paid his reſpects to her, with infinite good-breeding, and then, ſtill addreſſing her in Italian, which ſeemed to be his native language, apologized for not having obeyed her ſummons in the morning.

"I was unavoidably detained," continued he, "by a perſon who came to me upon buſineſs, and whom I found it impoſſible to diſmiſs, till after the hour you had done me the honour to appoint. To-morrow, however," added he, "I hope to be at your orders the whole day."

This ſpeeeh, though it was uttered in a low voice, and evidently deſigned for the ears of Mrs. Hertford only, Eltham, as he ſat next her, loſt not one word of.

Reſentment and mortification at firſt kept him motionleſs and ſilent; but recollecting the various inſtances he had already known of the habitual duplicity of her character, the temporary illuſion he had indulged vaniſhed in a moment, and ſhe appeared to him, once more, ſuch as ſhe really was; an unfeeling and ſeductive coquette, made up of inſincerity and deceit—aiming continually at univerſal admiration

admiration and conqueſt; and as unworthy of exciting. as ſhe was incapable of experiencing, a ſerious or laſting attachment.

Theſe reflections, which darted acroſs his mind with the rapidity of lightning, left him not an inſtant in doubt, concerning the reſolution he ſhould take. Without ſeeking any explanation—without making the ſlighteſt apology—or betraying the leaſt emotion, he roſe with an air of perfect indifference, and wiſhing Mrs. Hertford good evening, made a general bow to the reſt of the party, and walked calmly out of the room; firmly determined never to truſt himſelf within her doors again, nor ever, but as a caſual and common acquaintance, to addreſs her hereafter, ſhould chance again throw him in her way.

His reſidence at Naples, after this uſeful little leſſon, was too ſhort to allow him an opportunity of breaking the wiſe reſolution he had formed. He ſaw Mrs. Hertford no more: but enquiring among his friends, heard with a mixture of concern and indignation, that the preſent object of her attention, the young man he

had ſeen at her houſe, was already engaged to another lady, a very amiable and lovely woman, whom, ſince his acquaintance with Mrs. Hertford, he had neglected in the cruelleſt manner, and it was generally believed, would end by deſerting entirely.

The event, however, did not juſtify this prediction. From what cauſe her plan failed, Eltham never learnt, but that it proved wholly unſucceſsful, and that ſhe had left the place, was the firſt intelligence he received after he quitted Naples.

Since that period, till his arrival at Sidmouth, he had not even heard her name mentioned, and had almoſt forgotten her exiſtence; the moment, however, that Clarentine recalled her to his memory, and convinced him beyond a poſſibility of doubt, that ſhe was actually a reſident in the vicinity, a ſpecies of curioſity took poſſeſſion of his mind, which he could neither account for, nor ſuppreſs; and which led him immediately to embrace the reſolution of ſeeking her out, and renewing an acquaintance that had been ſo long interrupted. Yet, though determined upon this plan for himſelf, the natural

ſenſe

ſenſe of propriety, which, notwithſtanding all his flightineſs, ſtill remained unextinguiſhed at the bottom of his heart, pointed out to him ſtrongly the neceſſity of preſerving the young and inexperienced Clarentine from forming a connection which might, hereafter, prove ſo extremely prejudicial to her. It is true, Mrs. Hertford was ſtill viſited, and ſtill received by many eſtimable people; her character had never been publickly attacked, and her ſituation in the world was ſuch as to place her in the beſt ſociety: but by thoſe who knew her real hiſtory—who might have heard of her conduct towards Charles Godfrey—her ſubſequent elopement—her many fruitleſs attempts to enſure an advantageous eſtabliſhment—her diſſipation and extravagance after ſhe married; and finally, the total ruin to which ſhe reduced her huſband, by perſons well acquainted with all theſe tranſactions, what might not be the concluſion drawn, from ſeeing a young woman come forward, on her firſt ſetting out in life, under ſuch auſpices? Eltham, who really admired and reſpected Clarentine more than any one he knew; who adored the

ingenuous ſimplicity of her manners, and the angelic purity of her mind; Eltham ſhuddered at the bare idea of her being expoſed to the illiberal ſarcaſms of a cenſorious and miſ judging world, which, guided in its deciſion by partial appearances, without inveſtigation and without humanity, would, in all probability, include her in every reflection thrown out againſt Mrs. Hertford, and aſcribe to her, irreproachable as ſhe was, the ſame levity of character, which with ſo much more juſtice might be attributed to that lady.

Uninfluenced, therefore, by any ungenerous or vindictive motives, but ſolely inſtigated by an honourable deſire of being uſeful to an intereſting, and now almoſt unprotected young female, Eltham acted the part that has already been deſcribed, and gave the timely caution Clarentine ſo gratefully received.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

IT was late in the evening before Eltham thought of taking leave, or knew how to tear himſelf from ſociety which he found, every moment, more and more captivating. In Clarentine, particularly, ſince the reſerve and diſtance that had formerly repulſed him had given way to greater eaſe and complacency, he diſcovered ſo many attaching qualities, ſuch a noble frankneſs of diſpoſition, ſoftened by a delicacy ſo conſiderate, and a ſweetneſs of temper ſo truly faſcinating, that, although ſhe was at times heavily depreſſed, and incapable of joining in the converſation, ſhe made a deeper impreſſion upon him, and rendered him a more ſincere convert to her merit, than he had ever been before. At his requeſt, on ſeeing a harp ſtanding in a diſtant part of the room, ſhe ſung and played to him ſeveral of the moſt beautiful little airs ſhe could ſelect, and did it all with an unaffected diffidence, an unpretending modeſty, that gave additional charms to the touching ſoftneſs of her voice and expreſſion.

"Upon my honour," exclaimed he, at length, after ſhe had ceaſed playing, and once more had quietly reſumed her work, "you are the moſt extraordinary creature I ever met with! Brought up in ſuch profound retirement; living in a place from whence all profeſſional excellence was ſo far removed, and where, conſequently, you had as few means of improvement, as incitements to emulation—how, I beſeech you—how did you acquire talents ſo bewitching, and manners ſo irreſiſtable? Am I, at laſt, to believe in all I have heard reported of innate and intuitive endowments? Am I to ſuppoſe you were *born* with all theſe advantages?"

"You cannot expect a ſerious anſwer, Mr. Eltham," replied Clarentine, laughing, "to a queſtion ſo extravagant, and therefore, if you pleaſe, we will talk of ſomething rather more rational."

She then turned the converſation upon the ſubject of her friend Sophia, and after warmly praiſing the goodneſs of her heart, and the ſportive gaiety of her diſpoſition, aſked Eltham what he thought of her?

"Such an enquiry," replied he, "coming from a perſon who is avowedly ſo partial

tial to her, is hardly fair; however, I will anſwer you with ſincerity and truth; and this I can the more readily do, as my opinion exactly coincides with your own. From the little I ſaw of her, ſhe appeared to me a very lively, animated, and pleaſing girl—totally devoid of either guile, or affectation. Her beauty," continued he, " is not conſpicuous enough to render her, upon a ſhort acquaintance, an object of great attraction; but, I ſhould ſuppoſe, ſhe is one of thoſe, who gaining upon the heart by imperceptible gradations, from having *begun* by *entertaining*, would very probably *end*, by ſeriouſly *attaching*."

Clarentine, much pleaſed with this anſwer, repeated its ſubſtance in French to Madame d'Arzele, who, whilſt he was ſpeaking, had been finiſhing a letter at another table.

" Ah, vous avez bien raiſon," cried ſhe, addreſſing Eltham, " Sophia, avec

" Aſſez d'eſprit pour ſavoir être aimable,
" Et pas aſſez pour être inſupportable.*

montre tant de zele quand il s'agit de ſervir ſes amis, a un naturel ſi heureux,

* Florian.

tant de franchiſe, et de droiture, quil eſt impoſſible de ne pas l'aimer, du moment qu'elle ſe fait connoitre."*

"I fancy, my dear madam," ſaid Eltham archly, "Monſieur le Chevalier was very much of the ſame way of thinking. Mademoiſelle Sophia appeared to be a great favourite of his."

"And conſequently," returned Madame d'Arzele reproachfully, "you ſuſpect him of being in love with her? Have a little more candour, however, Mr. Eltham; and be aſſured, it is very poſſible for a man of honour to find great charms in the ſociety and converſation of an agreeable young woman, without having formed any plan in order to ingratiate himſelf in her favour; or, (under circumſtances ſo diſadvantageous as the Chevalier's) without being in the leaſt influenced by an undue ſpirit of gallantry."

Eltham, extremely aſhamed of having given cauſe for ſuch a reproof, received it, however, with great humility, and ear-

* Ah, you are very right. Sophia is ſo zealous in the ſervice of her friends, has ſo happy a diſpoſition, and ſo upright and generous a heart, that it is impoſſible not to love her, from the moment ſhe makes herſelf known."

neſtly

neſtly apologized for the freedom and impertinence that had called it forth. The ſubject was then dropped, and a different converſation ſtarted.

When he, at length, had departed, and the two friends were left together, Clarentine related to Madame d'Arzele all that had paſſed upon the ſubject of Mrs. Hertford, and ended by entreating her to take the moſt effectual means, in order to prevent her ever being admitted again.

"Whatever appearance," continued ſhe, "ſuch a denial may have, it is ſufficient that we know her to be a woman of an equivocal character, to render it abſolutely neceſſary we ſhould avoid all farther intercourſe with her. I am no *prude*," added ſhe ſmiling, "nor in the leaſt apprehenſive of being hurt myſelf by the ſociety of ſuch a perſon: but I begin already to be afraid of the world, to think of its uncharitable cenſures with terror, and to dread nothing ſo much as the danger of falling under its laſh. Beſides, what opinion could Mr. Eltham himſelf have of us, if, after the half-extorted caution I obtained from him, we were ſtill—"

"My

"My deareſt Clarentine," interrupted Madame d'Arzele, "can you imagine any additional arguments are neceſſary to convince me of the propriety of all you have ſaid? Be aſſured, I have not the ſmalleſt deſire ever to ſee Mrs. Hertford more; and ſhall give the ſtricteſt charge to my own woman, as well as to the people of the houſe, poſitively to deny us both, ſhould curioſity or idleneſs bring her to this place again."

Clarentine was perfectly ſatisfied by ſuch an aſſurance; and ſoon after they retired for the night.

Three days now paſſed, during which they were totally unmoleſted by their apprehended viſitor; Eltham was, however, in that interval, almoſt a conſtant gueſt; ſeldom quitting them, except at the hour of their meals, or for a ſhort time in an evening, whilſt Madame d'Arzele was up ſtairs with her children, and Clarentine taking her uſual walk in the orchard at the back of the houſe.

Towards the cloſe of the fourth day, whilſt thus purſuing her ſolitary ramble, and perplexing herſelf with fruitleſs conjectures relative to the diſtreſſing ſilence obſerved

obſerved by Mr. Lenham, Eltham unexpectedly joined her, and putting into her hand a packet of letters—"I am juſt returned," cried he, "from the poſt-houſe, where, after receiving my own diſpatches, I enquired whether there were any for you, and was entruſted with theſe. At firſt," continued he, "I felt half tempted not to deliver them till juſt at the moment of taking leave, leſt the buſineſs of reading them ſhould employ ſo much of your time that I might be deprived of the indulgence you have hitherto granted me, and get no muſic to night; but, upon ſecond thoughts, I perſuaded myſelf you would have more conſcience than to reward me ſo ill for my civility."

"Certainly," replied Clarentine, ſmiling, "let me, till now, have required what preſſing I would, upon ſuch an occaſion as this, at leaſt, I am bound to ſing at the firſt word."

So ſaying, ſhe haſtened towards the houſe, and on entering the parlour, putting a book into Eltham's hand, proceeded impatiently to the examination of her ſeveral letters.

The

The firſt ſhe opened was one from Mr. Lenham, written in terms ſo friendly and benevolent, that it brought tears into her eyes. He began by informing her, that having loſt his wife ſome months previous to the receipt of her letter, he had lately prevailed upon a female relation of his, and her daughter, to fix their reſidence with him, and to undertake the entire ſuperintendance of his family. Theſe ladies, he added, though they had not the honour of being acquainted with Miſs Delmington, would neglect no means in their power, he was perſuaded, to render her abode beneath his roof as comfortable as poſſible; and he therefore flattered himſelf, the knowledge of their being his inmates would neither make any alteration in her plan, nor be the occaſion of her deferring a journey he looked forward to with ſo much pleaſure.

In compliance with her injunctions, he next, though with evident reluctance, ſpoke of the conditions upon which ſhe had ſo poſitively declared her reſolution of *alone* becoming his boarder, and fixing them at the moſt moderate rate, concluded

cluded by expreſſing his earneſt wiſhes for her ſafe and ſpeedy arrival.

"All then is now ſettled!" thought Clarentine, with a ſigh; "my departure is inevitable, and every thing concurs to haſten and facilitate it! Ah, would I could think of it with the ſame indifference that thoſe will, who firſt—"

She ſtopped, and checking the too ready murmurs that were unconſciouſly eſcaping her, turned to the yet unopened letters that lay upon the table, and taking them up, ſought by their peruſal to divert the painful ideas that had involuntarily obtruded themſelves.

Meanwhile Eltham, who had for ſome time thrown aſide his book, and placed immediately oppoſite to her, ſat with his eyes intently riveted upon her face, unſuſpectedly obſerving her as ſhe read, ſuddenly beheld every muſcle in her countenance relax, and the tears ſtealing ſlowly down her cheeks, fall in large drops upon the paper that ſhe held.

Inexpreſſibly affected by ſuch a ſight, yet, reſpecting too much the ſilent ſorrow it betrayed, to diſturb her, at that moment, with untimely queſtions, he waited

waited anxiouſly till ſhe had ceaſed reading, before he ventured to approach, or interrogate her.

Softened by the compaſſionate gentleneſs of his looks and voice, unuſed to diſguiſe, and open-hearted as a child, Clarentine, without allowing herſelf time for reflection, pointed to the letter ſhe had juſt thrown down, and mournfully anſwered—

"Ah! were you to read that, Mr. Eltham, you would no longer wonder at my emotion. It comes from Sir Edgar Delmington, and though calculated upon the whole to give me the higheſt pleaſure, yet in many places it is ſuch as almoſt to break my heart."

Thunderſtruck by this ſpeech, and far better qualified to comprehend its full meaning than Clarentine was aware, or indeed, had ſhe *been* aware, ſhe was at that inſtant ſufficiently collected to guard againſt, Eltham changed colour, and loſing all command over himſelf, indignantly exclaimed—

"And is it poſſible then, Miſs Delmington, that the whining complaints, or the inſolent reproaches of a man who has acted

acted by you ſuch a part, can have any effect upon a mind like yours! Good God! Why read his contemptible letters? Why honour them with ſo much notice?"

He was proceeding—when ſtruck by the inconceivable amazement he ſaw depicted in Clarentine's countenance, his own aſſumed a calmer expreſſion, and with more compoſure he added—

"But I beg your pardon—I ought not to declare my ſentiments ſo freely, and ſcarcely know how to excuſe the liberty I have taken."

"*Excuſe* it!" repeated Clarentine, recovering by degrees from the extreme aſtoniſhment ſhe had been thrown into—"That I believe would *indeed* be difficult! But at leaſt *account* for it, Mr. Eltham—explain your meaning—and tell me, I beſeech you, how Sir Edgar Delmington can have given riſe to this exceſs of enmity—of injuſtice!"

"I ſee," replied Eltham, proudly, "I ſee plainly, that prejudiced as you are, Miſs Delmington, all I can ſay, (and I acknowledge I have nothing *new* to tell you—nothing which your own integrity would not have taught you to condemn,

but

but for the fatal partiality which has miſguided you) will be of no further avail than to heighten your reſentment againſt *me*, without leſſening your good opinion of *him*. I have gone too far, however, to recede; and therefore, as briefly as I can, I will now give you the *explanation* you demand."

Clarentine, every inſtant more and more ſurpriſed, yet ſummoned ſufficient courage to liſten to him with compoſure, and he thus began—

"Amongſt all the various faults that may juſtly be aſcribed to me, that of mean curioſity has never been of the number. You will conſequently, Miſs Delmington, readily believe me, I hope, when I poſitively aſſure you the information by which I was enabled to judge of Sir Edgar's character and conduct was not of my own ſeeking. He is certainly no favourite of mine, but I knew he was deſtined to receive the hand of Lady Julia, and neither ſuſpected, nor wiſhed to know more. The day that preceded my arrival at Sidmouth, however, calling, as I had the honour to acquaint you, at Delmington Houſe, I was introduced into a parlour where alone,

alone, and apparently in no very placid diſpoſition of mind, I found Mrs. Harrington. Extremely at a loſs how to keep up, or even *begin* any converſation, and hoping every inſtant to be relieved by the entrance of ſome other member of the family, I wandered about the room, anxiouſly ſeeking, either in the proſpect, the furniture or the drawings that hung round it, freſh ſubjects for remark, and new objects to diſcourſe upon. At length my attention was caught by a very beautiful little ſketch, repreſenting a groupe of children at play. I took it down to examine it more nearly, praiſed it extremely, and aſked Mrs. Harrington by whom it had been deſigned? This was a ſufficient ſignal for her to begin! She told me, with much acrimony, it was by you; and then, with a virulence that defeated its own purpoſe, began ſo furious, and to me incomprehenſible, a declamation againſt you, that I liſtened to her with equal wonder and diſguſt! To be brief—ſhe concluded this malignant and indecent harangue, by a minute account of every circumſtance attending your late nocturnal interview with Sir Edgar; and

ſummed up the whole, as ſhe grew cooler by reflection, with an earneſt requeſt to me, never to make known what I had taken ſo little pains to learn."

Horror-ſtruck by this cruel, and almoſt incredible proof of Mrs. Harrington's implacability, Clarentine was ſome time before ſhe could command her indignation ſufficiently to be able to ſpeak with any degree of calmneſs. At length, however, ſtarting as if from a fearful dream—

"And what purpoſe, good Heaven!" exclaimed ſhe, "could the relation of ſuch a tale anſwer? Why publiſh it at all? and eſpecially, why publiſh it to you?"

"Certainly," replied Eltham, drily, "not to gratify *my* feelings; and ſtill leſs, to heighten my opinion of her *own* principles! The chief object ſhe propoſed to herſelf was the indulgence of that determined and inexplicable hatred ſhe ſeems to have conceived againſt you—a hatred, which not even the danger ſhe incurred of ruining her favourite ſcheme, (by making me the confidant of ſecrets, which, if repeated to Lord Welwyn, might have induced him, at once to withdraw his word), could prevent her giving utterance to.

But

But enough of this intemperate fury—my deſign was not ſo much to ſpeak of her, as to exculpate myſelf from the charge of *injuſtice* towards Sir Edgar, and to—"

"Oh, ſay no more," interrupted Clarentine, impatiently, "ſay no more, Mr. Eltham, I beſeech you! After the account that has been given you, I wonder not at any opinion you may have imbibed, either of Sir Edgar, or of me. Spare yourſelf, therefore, the needleſs trouble of adding another ſyllable in your own juſtification—and ſatisfied with the bitter mortification you have made me undergo, have ſufficient mercy, at leaſt, not to prolong a converſation ſo inſupportably humiliating!"

Eltham, extremely hurt by this ſpeech, and yet more by the indignant ſeverity with which it was uttered, now with great earneſtneſs exclaimed—

"You wrong me cruelly, Miſs Delmington! you wilfully and utterly miſrepreſent all I have ſaid! Can you indeed believe, that if the rancorous accuſations alledged againſt you by my officious informant had appeared to me either credible or juſt, I ſhould have been ſo wholly

wholly loſt to ſenſe and feeling, as to have deliberately ſelected *you* as the propereſt perſon to liſten to their repetition?"

"Such a ſuppoſition," replied Clarentine, "may have been erroneous: but allowing it was ſo—allowing, in reality, you had no deſign to ſhock and afflict me—ſtill, let me aſk, why did you enter into a detail, which at leaſt, you muſt be ſenſible, was ſo unneceſſary and ſo improper?"

"Unneceſſary!" repeated Eltham.—"What! when acquainted with every particular of Sir Edgar's unmanly conduct—when ſo fully convinced of his worthleſſneſs and perfidy—and when witneſſing the ill-deſerved ſorrow that his letter coſt you—was I then to be ſilent? could I then ſuppreſs the indignation I felt awakened againſt him? You cannot yourſelf imagine it was poſſible! Diſdain and contempt might, indeed, have kept me for ever ſilent, could I have been perſuaded you regarded him with all the indifference he merits: but when I found his artifices had ſo well ſucceeded; when in addition to the unpardonable inſult he has offered the unſuſpecting Julia, I diſcovered

covered alſo that he had undermined *your* peace, won *your* heart, and made himſelf ſuch an intereſt there, as neither the conviction of his duplicity, nor the diſgrace he has brought upon you, can counteract; I forgot the rigid caution I had ſworn to obſerve, and, at the hazard of incurring your everlaſting diſpleaſure, gave way to the almoſt irreſiſtible impulſe that urged me to lay before you my ſentiments and opinion: that *either* will be of any avail, I have not, as I ſaid before, the preſumption to imagine: but remember, Miſs Delmington, that if even among unthinking young men of his own age, whoſe moral principles, like my own, are far from being at all times ſtrictly conſonant to propriety, his late conduct appears ſo diſhonourable; among the graver and more reflecting part of mankind, it will ſeem too deſpicable to leave you any excuſe for ſtill harbouring an attachment ſo every way unworthy of you!"

"And what ground have you to believe, Sir," ſaid Clarentine, quite ſickened at the ſtrange infatuation which led every body to conclude her heart was ſo deeply engaged, "that the attachment

you impute to me really exiſts? You have hitherto heard but *one* ſide of the queſtion; be pleaſed, now, to read Sir Edgar's own letter, and then judge whether its contents are ſuch as would be addreſſed to a very partial or a very tender miſtreſs."

Eltham, ſurpriſed beyond all meaſure at this unexpected truſt, ſcarcely knew whether to accept it or not; obſerving, however, that Clarentine was ſerious in her propoſal, he, at length, though not without ſome confuſion, took the letter from her, and read as follows:

TO MISS DELMINGTON.

Delmington-Houſe, July —.

" Once more then, my beloved, my much injured Clarentine! once more I am permitted to addreſs you! Saved—almoſt miraculouſly ſaved, from the jaws of death, by what act more pleaſing to Heaven can I teſtify my gratitude for this unhoped for preſervation, than by humbling myſelf before *her* whom I have ſo cruelly wronged, and by ſeeking to obtain forgiveneſs from a being ſo upright, and ſo pure!

" Start

« Start not then, my gentle friend, at ſight of this, I fear, unwelcome hand; think not again that I will ſhock you by profeſſions I know you hold in ſuch abhorrence! Alas! though my heart is unchanged, my reaſon now tells me, I have forfeited, and muſt renounce for ever all right, henceforward, to renew them! I have expoſed you, if not to ruin, at leaſt to baniſhment and indignity; the part I have performed, artificial as it was—contrary to my own ſenſe of right, my own principles and judgment—that diſſembling and diſgraceful part, bringing with it its own puniſhment, has involved me in a depth of miſery, of ſelf-reproach, from which no time, perhaps, will ever reſcue me! Oh, Clarentine! condemn me as you will—think of me with what ſeverity you may; but, at leaſt, when anger gives place to milder ſentiments, when your firſt reſentment is appeaſed, pity and compaſſionate me!—*You*, I hope, may yet be happy; for you are tortured by no internal condemnation; you are exempted from all regret, and have neither ſhame nor love to contend with. Ah! may you never experience

ſuch love as mine has been—and may ſhame, as now, be for ever a ſtranger to your blameleſs and ingenuous mind.

" But why, inflexible, and indignant as you, no doubt, ſtill remain—why do I thus wander from the original purpoſe of this letter, and treſpaſs ſo long upon your patience? Am I *now* writing to the partial friend of my childhood—the indulgent companion of my earlieſt years? Am I *now* at liberty, as in happier times, to pour forth every ſecret of my heart—to expect you will participate in my feelings — ſhare in, or ſoften my afflictions? No; I am addreſſing an inexorable judge, one whoſe laſt words ſtill vibrate in my ears; who bade me *renounce and forget her*; who cruelly and ſternly told me, that, " were I openly priviledged to offer her my hand; were all other obſtacles to our union removed, her *own* repugnance to it could NEVER be ſurmounted!"

" Oh Clarentine! Sweet partaker of all my infant happineſs—ſole object upon whom, for ſo many years, have reſted all my hopes of future felicity—ſiſter of my heart, diſpoſer of my fate! is it thus then,

we

we are at length to part? Is it thus my faireſt proſpects are to be blaſted? my life, my whole remaining life to be embittered? Ah! tell me; to what is it you ſacrifice me? to a miſtaken notion of honour? a falſe principle of rectitude? or is it, as I have but too often, with ſhuddering apprehenſion, dreaded, is it that in reality ſome fearful antipathy, ſome unconquerable averſion impells you to a deed of ſo much inhumanity, and irreſiſtibly drives you from me? Your anger, your bittereſt reproaches I may have deſerved; but your HATRED, Clarentine! Good God! can I have merited that? The idea is terrible! Oh deign, at leaſt, to mitigate its horror by *one* line of comfort, one ſoftening, one alleviating ſentence, and I will ſubmit to any thing, even to the rigour of a repulſe ſo firm, and ſo deciſive!

"Again, however, am I deviating from the plain path I had preſcribed to myſelf. My deſign, deareſt Clarentine, was ſimply to have ſupplicated your pardon; not to have renewed my offences; and briefly to have acquainted you with the final reſult of the painful deliberation to which ſo

many hours of my long and melancholy confinement has been dedicated.

" The very inſtant I am emancipated from the irkſome reſtraint under which it is ſtill thought neceſſary to detain me, I ſhall haſten from this houſe, and return to Oxford. My heart however ſtrongly urges me, previous to that journey, to undertake another—to viſit Sidmouth, and bid a long farewel to all it moſt values, moſt prizes upon earth! yet this unſpeakable gratification—this laſt and precious indulgence I muſt forego. The conſequences to myſelf would be too perilous; ſince, were I again to ſee you, all my reſolution might forſake me—all my impracticable and viſionary projects might revive, and upon being, as they infallibly muſt, ſucceeded by freſh diſappointment, might leave me with even leſs fortitude, if poſſible, than now to ſuſtain it, a prey to ſtill greater anguiſh than any I have yet experienced.

" Hear then, deareſt Clarentine, my fixed and lateſt determination. Conſcious that I no longer poſſeſs a right to act for myſelf, that by my own indiſcretion I have utterly forfeited every claim to

this

this ineſtimable privilege, I purpoſe immediately writing to Lord Welwyn; and, if not as a reparation for my ingratitude, at leaſt as a proof of my repentance, faithfully laying before him an exact account of the actual ſtate of my heart, and of the tumultuous paſſions by which it has been miſguided. Let him then decide for himſelf. If I appear to him wholly undeſerving of pardon; if the duplicity which, in circumſtances ſo trying, I reluctantly permitted myſelf to uſe, ſeems too groſsly offenſive, and revolts too ſtrongly againſt his principles and feelings—if, in ſhort, he concludes me utterly unworthy of the honour he once intended me, I ſhall at leaſt have conducted myſelf, upon *this* occaſion, as became me, and have made one ſtep towards reconciling myſelf to my own conſcience, and effacing the ſtain, but too juſtly, affixed to my character. My debts likewiſe, and all that bears any reference to the pecuniary embarraſſments in which, by my own folly, I have been involved, ſhall with equal frankneſs be acknowledged; I can bear—I will ſubmit to no further concealments; and ſhould even the ſevereſt reception be

given to an avowal ſo unexpected, ſhould the moſt diſdainful rejection of me, *for ever*, be the conſequence—certain, however, that the *worſt* is known, and that all diſguiſe may be finally thrown off, I ſhall once more be able to look up in the face of day, grieved for the paſt, but fearleſs of the future—and exult in the conſciouſneſs of having nothing more to apprehend, or conceal!

" Far from imagining, however, that this tardy diſcloſure will be ſufficient, inſtantly, to blot out all my errors, and to give me an immediate right to aſpire to a diſtinction I have hitherto ſo ſlightly prized, I fully expect, nay *wiſh* Lord Welwyn ſhould make trial of my ſincerity, ſhould give me time before he comes to any final reſolution, to render myſelf more deſerving of his favour, and to obliterate the remembrance of the indignity I have ſo unworthily offered his amiable daughter. Oh! may her diſtruſt never be awakened by knowing with what indifference, not to ſay repugnance, I have till now looked forward to an union, which either reſpectfully, I ought at firſt to have declined—or joyfully, to have

at

at once accepted!—My heart tells me, indeed, that to love *her* as I have ardently, fervently adored *Clarentine*, will never be in my power: but gratitude, honour, juſtice, all urge me to declare, that if *now*, or *ever*, fate ſhould make her mine, the chief ſtudy of my life will be how beſt to promote her happineſs, and juſtify her confidence. Steadily, diligently, to this end, muſt I however fly you! What ſerenity could I hope to regain—what reſolution expect to preſerve, were the paſſion—the yet unextinguiſhed paſſion it would then be my duty to eradicate, daily—hourly fed, by ſeeing, by converſing with its object! No; rather let me baniſh myſelf from your preſence eternally—renounce your ſociety, ſhun your ſight as my greateſt bane; ſince, far eaſier ſhall I find it, to ſupport with reſignation a *total abſence*, than with impunity to permit myſelf the dangerous indulgence of a few occaſional meetings, calculated only to enfeeble and deſtroy me.

" And now, my Clarentine, what remains for me to add? Shall I call for your congratulations that, at length, I have

gained courage to form ſuch plans? or ſhall I again ſue for your pity, that what ſeems ſo cruel—ſo contrary to all my better hopes—ſhould thus unavoidably be neceſſary? Oh tell me, at leaſt, that you approve my purpoſe—that, if ſcrupulouſly purſued, it will reſtore me to your eſteem—and doubt not for one inſtant my firmneſs, my perſeverance!

"I dare take of you no leave, but with a heart overflowing with the tendereſt wiſhes for your welfare and happineſs, ſubſcribe myſelf ſincerely yours,

"EDGAR DELMINGTON."

"Well, Sir," ſaid Clarentine, when Eltham had read, and returned to her, this letter, "what is your opinion of Sir Edgar now? I flatter myſelf you will think with me, that he has fixed upon the nobleſt, and moſt effectual method of atoning for the paſt, and of enſuring that forgiveneſs from Lord Welwyn he is ſo anxious to obtain. Oh, then, deny him not any longer, Mr. Eltham, the eſteem to which he has ſo juſtly entitled himſelf! and if, hitherto, you have thought of him with

with unkindneſs, prove your own candour, by a generous recantation!"

"My deareſt Miſs Delmington," replied Eltham with warmth, "I needed not ſuch an admonition to ſtimulate me to repent every offenſive expreſſion I may have uſed—every indelicate accuſation I may have brought forward, in the courſe of this converſation. I ſee," continued he, "that you are an angel! Your firmneſs I admire, your conduct I revere; and for nothing more ſtrongly do I likewiſe (permit me to ſay it) love you, than for the unmerited gentleneſs with which you have this inſtant addreſſed me. As for Sir Edgar, I equally pity and applaud him; and, I aſſure you, give him credit for far greater ſelf command, nay, even *heroiſm*, than almoſt any other young man, attached to ſuch an object, and in ſuch a ſituation of mind, could have diſplayed."

"By proportioning his merit to the ſuppoſed difficulty he may have found in reſigning *me*," ſaid Clarentine ſmiling, "you take from me all power to purſue the ſubject; elſe, delighted as I am with the general tenour of his letter, with the

openneſs, the ſpirit, that breathes in it almoſt throughout, I could have dwelt upon his praiſes for ever!"

"And do you not fear," cried Eltham, "that if ſo warm in his commendation, I ſhall again relapſe into incredulity and ſuſpicion? again diſcredit your pretended impartiality, and accuſe you of coquetiſh artifice?"

"O, no," replied Clarentine, gaily, "ſeconded by this incontrovertible, though ſilent voucher," pointing to Sir Edgar's letter, "I can fear nothing, and may ſafely defy your utmoſt malice."

Here the entrance of Madame d'Arzele put an end to the converſation; and Clarentine, her mind lightened of half its cares, more chearful and more eaſy than for a ſingle moment ſhe had hitherto felt ſince her arrival at Sidmouth, ſoon after complied with the preſſing entreaties of Eltham, and accepting his offer of bringing to her her harp, which ſtood, as uſual, at the further end of the room, played over to him all his favourite airs, and alternately ſinging, or converſing, evinced, during the remainder of the evening, a degree

degree of animation, as new to him as it was enchanting.

Once whilſt ſhe was employed in tuning the inſtrument, and at the ſame time gaily talking to Madame d'Arzele, who had been rallying her upon the happy power ſhe ſeemed, excluſively, to poſſeſs, of rendering Mr. Eltham attentive and quiet, he ſuddenly approached her, and, with that, (almoſt *ſtartling*) energy which was ſo common to him when any thing occaſioned his being particularly earneſt, abruptly exclaimed—

"Shall I never know, Miſs Delmington, what moſt to guard againſt when in your preſence? One moment, beholding you depreſſed and unhappy, though grieved you ſhould have cauſe, I ſtill perſuade myſelf that in any other ſituation of mind you would be leſs faſcinating, leſs dangerous; yet, the next inſtant, if your natural vivacity returns, far from finding this the caſe, you ſeem to acquire with it freſh powers of ſeduction!"

Clarentine, not more aſtoniſhed than offended at this extraordinary ſpeech, bluſhed extremely, and turning from him with undiſſembled vexation, anſwered—

"Upon

"Upon my word, Mr. Eltham, ſuch language is too ridiculous! Every ſtrange flight that comes into your head you permit yourſelf indiſcriminately to utter, and perfectly indifferent whether you give pleaſure or pain, often occaſion real, though I hope unintentional diſtreſs to your auditors."

"Nay, do not," cried Eltham, attempting, but ineffectually, to take her hand, "do not be ſeriouſly diſpleaſed. Muſt we always be at variance? perpetually at war?"

"That, Sir," replied Clarentine gravely, "depends wholly upon yourſelf. Be aſſured, however, that I will never liſten to ſuch exaggerated compliments without taking the liberty, very freely, to expreſs my diſapprobation of them."

Eltham would ſtill have rallied her into ſentiments of greater indulgence: but though calm, ſhe was firm in keeping to what ſhe had ſaid; and the matter, to her infinite relief, was ſoon dropt.

It being late when this little dialogue ended, and Eltham knowing Madame d'Arzele commonly retired early, ſhortly after took leave, and repaired to his own lodging.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

HAVING communicated to Madame d'Arzele the preceding night the contents, as well of Mr. Lenham's, as of Sir Edgar's letter, Clarentine ſhut herſelf up the next morning to give Lady Delmington, through the medium of Sophia, a general account of both, to ſolicit her directions concerning the fitteſt time, and propereſt method of undertaking her approaching journey, and to aſſure Sir Edgar, though not in an anſwer immediately addreſſed to himſelf, of the cordial and ſincere approbation with which ſhe had read the detail of his laudable and excellent plan.

Scarcely was this taſk completed, when Mr. Eltham, who regularly called every day about an hour after breakfaſt, either to attend Clarentine and her friend, if they

they walked—to ſit and read to them if their domeſtic engagements kept them in the houſe; or, if he could do neither, to romp and amuſe himſelf with the children; ſent one of them up to reproach Clarentine for ſtaying at home when the weather was ſo fine, and to preſs her earneſtly to put on her cloak, and haſten down immediately.

With this requeſt, unwilling herſelf to loſe ſuch a delightful morning, Clarentine readily complied; and taking the two little girls with her, as their mother juſt then wiſhed to be excuſed going, gaily ſallied forth.

They had not however proceeded far, though the children, active and fearleſs, were already out of ſight, when, at the very moment, Clarentine partly laughed, and partly teized into compliance, had accepted Eltham's arm, they were met by Mrs. Hertford, and the little ſtranger who had before accompanied her.

She knew, and inſtantly accoſted them; enquired of Clarentine how her charming friend did? apologized for not having ſooner called upon them to repeat her thanks for their civility; and then added,

"I left

"I left home this morning, however, merely with that deſign: but as I would not on any account, Miſs Delmington, be the occaſion of ſhortening, or retarding your walk, and am not ſenſible of the leaſt fatigue, I will make half my viſit to you while you ſtay out, and half after you return home."

By no means delighted at this intimation, and amazed that any one whom ſhe was conſcious of having received ſo coldly ſhould condeſcend thus ſtrangely to force herſelf upon her, Clarentine only bowed, and ſoon after they all moved on; Eltham by his countenance and ſilence betraying his vexation; Mrs. Hertford by her ſcrutinizing obſervation teſtifying her curioſity; and Clarentine by her bluſhes and heſitation evincing her confuſion.

After a ſhort and extremely irkſome walk, ſenſible that the longer ſhe protracted her return, the longer ſhe ſhould be expoſed to the embarraſſing looks of her unwelcome companion, Clarentine propoſed going home, and, ſtill cloſely followed by Mrs. Hertford, the next minute directed her ſteps towards the houſe.

The

The ſurpriſe of Madame d'Arzele, on ſeeing her come back ſo ſoon, and come back in ſuch ſociety, was evident and extreme. She looked by turns at each of the party for an explanation; ſeemed as if ſhe ſcarcely knew what to ſay, and, in a very ſhort time, ſunk into ſuch total ſilence, that Clarentine, ill-diſpoſed as ſhe felt for ſuch a taſk, was obliged to take upon herſelf the whole weight of the converſation; Eltham not chuſing to bear any part in it, and Mrs. Hertford herſelf appearing to think that as the *viſitor*, not the *viſited*, ſhe likewiſe might be exempted from making any effort to ſupport it.

The entrance of the children at length afforded Clarentine ſome relief. Unconſcious of their own power, how often in ſimilar circumſtances—when converſation fails—the miſtreſs of the houſe is languid, and her gueſts completely wearied, do theſe innocent and happy little beings bring unexpected comfort; reanimate the mother's face; diſſipate the ſtranger's gloom; and, by diverting their attention from each other, reſtore a whole party to chearfulneſs and eaſe.

Such

Such now, in ſome meaſure, happily proved the caſe. Mrs. Hertford, though ſhe ſcarcely noticed the children themſelves, ſmiled at, and commented on the pains Eltham took to make them riotous; and Madame d'Arzele and Clarentine, in their endeavours to keep them quiet, found, if not an agreeable, at leaſt a laſting ſource of occupation.

The diverſion, however, thus gladly embraced, though it tended to beguile, ſoon loſt its power to charm away the the time; and Clarentine, who from the moment of her entrance had never ceaſed wondering what could detain her, ſcarce ever experienced more ſatisfaction than when at length Mrs. Hertford roſe to depart.

She was attended to the door by Eltham, whom ſhe there kept a conſiderable time in converſation, and to whom Clarentine, as ſhe was returning to the parlour, heard her ſay—

"And how long, Sir, have you been acquainted with theſe ladies?"

"Really," anſwered Eltham, "I cannot be very accurate as to the exact time: but why do you enquire?"

"Becauſe,"

"Becauſe," replied ſhe, "it appears rather extraordinary you ſhould never have mentioned them during the frequent viſits you have paid at our houſe ſince your arrival."

"Why, my dear madam," cried Eltham, gaily, "do you think me ſo ſuperlatively dull, that I can find nothing better to entertain *one* pretty woman with, than encomiums upon *another?*"

"I am to infer then," ſaid Mrs. Hertford, with quickneſs, "that to *ſpeak* of Miſs Delmington, and to *praiſe* her, is, with you, the ſame thing?"

"Infer, my deareſt creature," anſwered he, careleſsly, "what you pleaſe, but aſk me no more queſtions, I intreat; ſince (pardon me for ſaying it) I know you too well to ſuppoſe they can either be the reſult of *chance*, or entirely the effect of *benevolence!*"

Frightened at this daring ſpeech, and dreading to hear its anſwer, Clarentine now haſtily threw open the garden door, and ran into it to avoid, while they continued talking ſo near the parlour, the poſſibility of catching another word.

"Good

"Good God! what muſt the woman be," thought ſhe, "to whom Eltham permits himſelf to hold ſuch language? What could be her reaſon, with ſo little to ſay, for making us ſo long a viſit? Or why, finding us ſo remiſs in attention to her, viſit us at all? I do not underſtand it; but I much fear, if Eltham talks to her in the ſame ſtrain much longer, he will make her the irreconcilable enemy of us both!"

Then recollecting her ſituation when met by Mrs. Hertford — leaning upon Eltham's arm — the children, as if purpoſely, detached from them — and he her only companion; ſhe blamed herſelf ſeverely for ever having walked out with him unaccompanied by Madame d'Arzele, and trembled at the opinion ſuch a ſtory, if maliciouſly reported, might give riſe to at Delmington. It now alſo for the firſt time occurred to her, that it was wrong to permit Eltham ſuch free and continual acceſs into their houſe. Though by his own undeſigning behaviour, his eaſe, and good humour, ſhe had been taught almoſt to forget how lately he had been introduced to her, it was yet but too

true

true that he was ſtill only the acquaintance of a day—had no family connection, no relationſhip with her whatever—and that neither his age, or the profligacy imputed to his character, rendered him a fit intimate for a young woman in circumſtances ſuch as her's. Had not Mrs. Harrington already, with the moſt envenomed rancour, aſperſed and vilified her? and would ſhe not, happy in ſuch an opportunity, ſeize with avidity every freſh occaſion of pouring upon her abuſe and odium?

"Alas!" cried ſhe, "I forgot, or rather till this minute I never was aware, that independent of thoſe evils brought on by our own miſconduct, there are others, almoſt equally dreadful, which are ſolely the reſult of our inexperience and want of foreſight. Eltham's converſation, whilſt confined as it hitherto has been to vague and general ſubjects, was pleaſant to me, and I fancied alſo, allowable. Poliſhed without affectation, entertaining without ſarcaſm, and eaſy without impertinence, I flatter myſelf, both being free from all deſign, that we might ſafely, whilſt reſiding in the ſame vicinity, aſſo-

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ciate with each other. Too late, however, I have diſcovered my error; and fatal, if this Mrs. Hertford is as illiberal as ſhe is myſterious, fatal may it prove to me!"

Terrified by this apprehenſion, and angry with Eltham for having ſo much contributed to expoſe her to conjecture, by unneceſſarily keeping ſecret his knowledge of her, although, as was now apparent, a conſtant viſitor at Mrs. Hertford's, ſhe determined in future to keep out of his way as much as poſſible; to check his aſſiduities by every means in her power; and above all, earneſtly to attempt limiting the number of his viſits, and the length of their duration.

Whilſt yet occupied in framing plans ſuch as theſe, Eltham himſelf joined her, and as he advanced, anxiouſly called out—

"What, my deareſt Miſs Delmington, makes you look ſo thoughtful and ſo grave?"

Clarentine, unwilling at firſt to confeſs to him the cauſe, looked embarraſſed, and heſitated ſo long what to anſwer, that concluding

concluding her ſerioufneſs was the mere effect of accident, he forbore making any further enquiries, and taking her hand, ſaid—

"Come, you want a little diſſipation; ſuppoſe therefore, we now reſume our walk?"

"No indeed!" cried Clarentine haſtily, "I will neither go out with you again to-day, nor, if I can help it, any other day."

"No?" exclaimed he, much ſurpriſed, "And why?"

"I would tell you," anſwered ſhe, more calmly, "but that I fear your repreſentations, although determined not to ſuffer myſelf to be influenced by them."

"Vain indeed ſhould I be," reſumed Eltham, evidently picqued by this declaration, "if, after hearing a determination ſo candid, you hazarded any of the expoſtulations you ſo cauſeleſsly apprehend. Explain yourſelf freely, therefore, Miſs Delmington."

"I will," ſaid Clarentine, affecting not to ſeem conſcious of his diſpleaſure, you

may remember, Sir, that when I parted from my friends at Delmington, and firſt came to this place, our acquaintance was ſcarcely of a week's ſtanding, and in itſelf of ſo ſlight a nature, and ſo accidentally began that no one could have wondered, had it ſtopped there, ſhould we mutually have diſclaimed any thing beyond the mere knowledge of each other's names and faces. This being the caſe, what would Lady Delmington, what would Mrs. Harrington conclude, were they to hear, that ſhe, who ſo lately was almoſt an entire ſtranger to you, now authorized your daily attendance at all hours; wandered about the country with you without any other companion; received you early, and detained you late; and was never ſeen but in your ſociety? I might ſay, very ſafely, that your viſits are not more meant for me than for Madame d'Arzele: but ſtill, knowing as I do, how ſeldom ſhe is able, or willing to be of our continual excurſions, how much when *you* are below, *ſhe* ſits above, and how frequently we have been ſeen without her, I ſhould find this, I fear, a very inſufficient plea, and be extremely ill prepared to anſwer all the

objections that might be made to it. My requeſt to you, therefore, is, Sir, that for the few days I remain here, you will either make your viſits ſhorter and leſs conſtant, or, without being offended, and imagining I mean to ſhew you any *perſonal* diſreſpect, that you will permit me, when you call, to walk out, as formerly by myſelf, or to ſit quietly up-ſtairs in my own room, and leave to Madame d'Arzele the ceremony of receiving you."

Never was aſtoniſhment equal to that which reſtrained Eltham from interrupting this frank, and, to him, extraordinary ſpeech. He looked at her for ſome time as if doubting the reality of what he had heard, and was preparing to anſwer her with great iraſcibility, when recollecting there might be as much of ſudden fear as of eſtabliſhed diſlike in what ſhe had ſaid, he inſtantly changed his purpoſe, and hoping to make ſome advantage of the conſternation ſhe had been thrown into, eagerly exclaimed—

"I will conſent to any thing, renounce every thing, provided you will but promiſe, on your arrival in town, to take off this

this fearful interdiction, and permit me to ſee, and to viſit you there, as if it had never paſſed!"

"I will make," cried Clarentine, offended and amazed in her turn, "no ſuch promiſe! you cannot have any right, Mr. Eltham, to exact it; nor to ſuppoſe, that in the hope of enſuring a temporary good, I ſhould voluntarily bring upon myſelf a laſting evil!"

"Why, what an arbitrary little deſpot you are!" cried he, endeavouring under a ſemblance of gaiety to diſguiſe the mortification and anger a refuſal ſo ſteady had given riſe to; "diſdaining all compromiſe, rejecting all conditions, what a very tyrant you are become!"

"I am ſorry, Sir," ſaid Clarentine, with greater mildneſs, "you compelled me to it; as we know each other's ſentiments, however, now, there can be no further neceſſity for my ſtay, and therefore I ſhall wiſh you good morning."

"Why whither are you then going?"

"To my own room, Sir. I have a letter to finiſh before the poſt goes out, and no time, I believe, to loſe."

She then haſtily left him, while yet too much confounded to have power to ſtop her, and ran up ſtairs.

CHAP. II.

WHEN Clarentine and Madame d'Arzele met at dinner, the former, with her accuſtomed ſincerity, related all that had paſſed in her own mind previous to her conference with Eltham, as well as the particulars and reſult of that conference itſelf. When ſhe had ended her account,

"I may, perhaps," added ſhe, "have been rather too plain with him: but it is impoſſible to recollect the ſtrange engagement into which he would have perſuaded me to enter, without wondering he ſhould not himſelf have foreſeen the retort it muſt occaſion."

"From any one elſe, my dear Clarentine," ſaid Madame d'Arzele, he *would* have foreſeen it: but you and I have treated him with too much indulgence,

have literally ſpoilt him. I am glad, therefore, with all my heart you have had the courage to put a little check upon him; and by no means ſorry to find the wearifome length of his never-ending viſits is likely to be ſomewhat moderated; though as the more oſtenſible *miſtreſs of the houſe*, I could never have permitted myſelf to give him ſuch a hint, without running the riſk of offending him for life."

Then recurring to what Clarentine had ſaid relating to her fears, leſt the miſrepreſentations, Mrs. Hertford's prying curioſity ſhewed her ſo fully prepared to make, ſhould reach Delmington, and gain credit there, Madame d'Arzele beſought her to explain her reaſons for having, as ſhe ſuppoſed, invited her in; and gave the moſt ludicrous account of the conſternation and diſmay with which ſhe ſaw her enter.

Clarentine readily ſatisfied her as to the ſhare ſhe had borne in that tranſaction, and briefly informed her of every particular that had attended their meeting; after which, by mutual conſent, a different ſubject was ſtarted, and both ſought, as much as it was in their power, to drive

the unpleaſant occurrences of the morning from their thoughts.

The whole afternoon and evening paſſed, and Eltham never appeared; the ſucceeding day elapſed, and ſtill his abſence continued. Clarentine then began to be frightened, and half wiſhed—leſt in trying to avert *one* evil ſhe had brought upon herſelf *another*, and made him an enemy who had before been a friend—ſhe had either ſpoken more cautiouſly, or wholly foreborn ſpeaking at all, contenting herſelf with avoiding him without aſſigning any reaſon for it. Yet this, impracticable, and ſelf-willed as he was, ſhe believed would have been almoſt impoſſible; ſince go whither ſhe would, unleſs formally prohibited, he would have inſiſted upon following her, and deny him as often as ſhe pleaſed, he would have called again the next hour. Diſcarding, therefore, all uſeleſs repinings, and convinced in her own mind, that however impolitic, what ſhe had done was, at leaſt, candid and honeſt, ſhe acquitted herſelf of any wrong intentions, and determined quietly to await the event.

A letter

A letter from Sophia, which arrived the following morning, contributed more than ever to confirm her in theſe ſentiments, and to relieve her from all remaining uneaſineſs reſpecting what had paſſed.

That affectionate, and excellent girl, began in Lady Delmington's as well as her own name, by thanking her moſt warmly for the confidence and kindneſs with which ſhe had acknowledged to them her receipt of Sir Edgar's letter; and for the unreſerved and ſatisfactory account ſhe had given of its contents. Her mother, ſhe added, ſince its communication no longer appeared the ſame woman; all her doubts baniſhed, all her alarm ſubſided; and in conſequence, ſhe had fully authorized Sophia to inform her, that henceforward, every objection to her writing publicly and openly to the whole family, and to Lady Julia alſo, was for ever at an end.

Speaking next of her brother, ſhe ſaid he was to ſet out for Oxford the following week; having within the laſt four or five days amended ſo rapidly, that it was no longer deemed neceſſary to delay his journey.

"Inſtead of writing, however," proceeded ſhe, "as he told you he would, he yeſterday had a long, and I doubt not moſt intereſting conference with Lord Welwyn himſelf, who kindly called in the courſe of the morning to enquire perſonally after him. I have not heard the particulars of what paſſed between them: but if I may judge by my brother's recruited ſpirits, and by his Lordſhip's own cordiality at parting, they were only ſuch as to give us all ſatisfaction and comfort.

"Beſides, Edgar, who uſed ſo ſedulously to avoid Lady Julia, now ſeizes every opportunity of throwing himſelf, without affectation, in her way; and for *him*, really makes a very aſſiduous courtier; a change her Ladyſhip appears by no means either diſpleaſed with, or inſenſible to!"

"But *apropos* to Lady Julia, my dear Clarentine, ſhe complains much of your determined ſilence, and ſeems extremely hurt by it. Pray write to her very ſoon. She knows of your impending journey, and has been told *whom* you are to live with, and why you leave us, which, (according to *our* account) is becauſe—let me

me ſee; I have almoſt forgot my leſſon! —O, becauſe Mr. Lenham himſelf deſired it; and Mr. Lenham was the great friend of the late Mrs. Somerſet, and may therefore reaſonably be ſuppoſed to feel much intereſted about her favourite niece and early *protegée*.

"Now remember you do not ſpoil this pretty ſtory, by telling more than you ought to do! I aſſure you it coſt *us* much trouble and pains to invent.

"But ſtop—before I proceed further, let me acquaint you with a piece of good news, which will, I know, rejoice you. Edgar has acknowledged all his debts, as he no doubt informed you was his deſign, (though you prudently forbore touching upon *that* ſubject in your joint letter to my mother and me) not only to Lord Welwyn, but to her alſo; and ſhe, (my mthe r) confeſſing as much to Mrs. Harrington, that incomprehenſible perſon, in a fit of, ſcarce credible, munificence, undertook to diſcharge them entirely herſelf, as a teſtimony of the high approbation with which ſhe honours his preſent conduct. Now tell me, if you dare, that miracles are over!

"With regard, my love, to the directions you aſk concerning your journey, my mother is of opinion you ought by no means to travel ſo far alone, and has therefore deviſed what, I hope, you will think a very comfortable method of obviating this difficulty.

"Our good and worthy old houſekeeper, Mrs. Newnham, has a daughter in London whom ſhe has long been very anxious to viſit. My mother knowing this, and at the ſame time being thoroughly ſatisfied ſhe could not entruſt you to a properer perſon, has commiſſioned me to tell you, that if, on Monday next, you can proceed as far as Exeter with Madame d'Arzele's woman, Mrs. Newnham ſhall meet you there, at the principal inn, and travel on with you the reſt of the way. Write therefore immediately to Mr. Lenham to inform him of this arrangement—an arrangement which, however *you* may, and, I flatter myſelf, *will* approve—it grieves *me* to be obliged, with ſuch methodical *ſang-froid*, to write about.

"I read to Edgar the friendly little meſſage you ſent to him, and he ſeemed much gratified and affected by it: yet, like

like a true encroacher, could not help confeſſing he ſhould have been ſtill better pleaſed had it been written immediately to *himſelf*. So, however, would *not* my mother; and therefore it is quite as well as it is.

" But my deareſt Clarentine, I muſt now bid you farewel. I ſhall write to you again very ſoon, and hope to hear from you as early as you can after your arrival in London.

" Heaven bleſs and preſerve you—grant you a ſafe and pleaſant journey—a cordial reception—good ſpirits and good health!

" Adieu; and believe me with the trueſt and warmeſt affection,

" Yours ever,

" S. DELMINGTON."

P. S. " O, but I had almoſt forgot! It is reported here, by one of his own men, whom he lately ſent back to Welwyn Park, that the ſage, the modeſt, the humble Mr. Eltham, has taken a lodging, at Sidmouth, *cloſe to yours*—that he walks out *tete-à-tete* with you every day—that in an evening you ſpend whole hours ſinging and playing to him—and

finally, that he almoſt *lives* at your houſe! Take care, take care, my deareſt girl! ſcandal and defamation are very prevalent in theſe evil days, and many are the evil tongues you have to guard againſt! —Send Eltham about his buſineſs as ſoon as you can—and if he muſt viſit you, give my compliments to him, and tell him to wait till you get to Mr. Lenham's; for Madame d'Arzele is *beaucoup trop jeune et jolie*, to make a proper Duenna for you! —Adieu!"

Painfully meditating upon its contents, Clarentine yet held this letter in her hand, when Eltham himſelf opened the parlour door, and entered. He had taken a circuit on purpoſe to come in at the back part of the houſe unſeen by the ladies, and, in his way, meeting with no one to announce him, (a ceremony indeed he had of late ſeldom given himſelf the trouble to obſerve) had proceeded boldly forward till he reached the uſual ſitting room, where he, very juſtly, concluded himſelf ſecure of finding the object of his ſearch.

He

He was beginning, though in a tone leſs gay and animated than uſual, to addreſs her, when Clarentine, abruptly ſtarting up—the caution ſhe had ſo recently received giving additional celerity to her motions, flew towards an oppoſite door with a view of making her eſcape, without uttering a ſyllable.

Eltham, however, ſaw her deſign, and ſpringing after her, in aſtoniſhment inexpreſſible, he took her hand, and as he led her back, fixing his penetrating eyes upon her downcaſt face, with a mixture of curioſity and reſentment—

"Good God!" he exclaimed, "whence this inconceivable, this extraordinary behaviour? Do I dream? or are you really the ſame Miſs Delmington—the ſame friendly, amiable, and unaffected creature, who ſo lately welcomed my approach with ſmiles and with good humour?—Who—

"Mr. Eltham," interrupted Clarentine, ſtruggling to diſengage her hand, "let me paſs I beſeech you!—if you are offended, if I appear capricious and ill-bred, I am ſorry for it: but I have reaſons, indiſpenſable reaſons for what I do,

and

and cannot ſuffer you to detain me an inſtant longer!"

"Is it poſſible then, you ſhould imagine," cried Eltham, ſtill oppoſing her retreat, and ſtedfaſtly gazing at her—"I can part with you whilſt in a ſtate of ſuch ſuſpenſe? For worlds would I not neglect this opportunity, the *only* one you may ever again afford me, of bringing you to an explanation; of enquiring into the true cauſe of a change ſo ſudden, and ſo mortifying! Have I not punctually, ſcrupulouſly obſerved your laſt injunctions? Abſtained three whole days from venturing near the houſe? and can you ſtill wiſh to fly me? ſtill drive me from you?"

Clarentine, aſhamed, diſtreſſed, and irreſolute, hung down her head in total ſilence, unable, without acknowledging it was to the advice of Sophia her encreaſed reſerve was owing, to account for a conduct, ſhe could not but allow he had ſo much reaſon to be diſpleaſed with; and equally unable to frame any other excuſe that ſhould appear at all plauſible to a man whoſe penetration ſhe ſo much dreaded,

dreaded, and whoſe enquiries were ſo pointed.

Whilſt with averted looks, therefore, thus heſitating and thus confuſed ſhe ſtood, Eltham ſtill vainly urging her to ſpeak, a ſudden end was put to her difficulties and deliberations, by the abrupt appearance of the maid of the houſe, who, half opening the door called out—

"Miſs—a lady—"

and immediately drawing back, gave place to Mrs. Hertford, who the next moment haſtily entered.

Eltham, at this ſight, muttering between his teeth an indiſtinct imprecation, and inſtantly dropping the reluctant hand he had ſo long detained, bowed coldly and ſtiffly to the fair intruder, and walked ſullenly to the window; whilſt Clarentine ſcarcely leſs provoked, and infinitely more abaſhed, ſtammered, bluſhed, and looked ſo guilty and ſo conſcious, that an obſerver of far leſs diſcernment, or far greater candour than Mrs. Hertford, might very naturally have put the ſame conſtruction upon what ſhe ſaw, which that lady inſtantly, and unheſitatingly, thought

thought ſhe was authorized to put upon it herſelf.

Diſſembling her ſentiments however, and approaching Clarentine with perfect eaſe and compoſure, ſhe took her hand with the intimacy of eſtabliſhed friendſhip, and enquiring, in a tone of far greater complacency than that in which ſhe had addreſſed her during her laſt viſit, after Madame d'Arzele, then added, without waiting for an anſwer—

"I underſtand, my dear Miſs Delmington, you are upon the point of quitting Sidmouth as well as myſelf; will you therefore excuſe the liberty I take, if I venture to enquire how you propoſe travelling, and whether it would be agreeable to you to accept a ſeat in my uncle's carriage, in preference to undertaking the journey alone?"

The extreme ſurpriſe this unexpected propoſal excited; the ſudden ſtart it occaſioned from Eltham, and the rapid ſucceſſion of new ideas to which it gave riſe in Clarentine, had the happieſt effect upon her ſpirits; and inſtantly diſſipating every trace of that painful embarraſſment under which

which ſhe had, the moment before, ſo ſeverely laboured, revived and reanimated her ſufficiently, to enable her, the next minute, without pauſe or heſitation, firmly, but, at the ſame time, with extreme good breeding to anſwer—

"Your offer, madam, does me infinite honour, and I ſhould have accepted it with great pleaſure, had I not this very morning received a letter from Delmington, containing the fulleſt directions, as well concerning the time at which I am to ſet out, as the companion with whom I am to travel, and the exact route we are to take."

"And when, then, may I aſk," cried Eltham, abruptly turning round, "do you ſet out?"

Clarentine, by no means anxious to anſwer this enquiry, attempted to turn it off with a laugh, and gaily replied—

"You and I have been quarrelling this morning, you know, Mr. Eltham; and therefore, as a little puniſhment for your curioſity, I ſhall take advantage of our not having yet *made it up*, and like children in the ſame circumſtances, *turn ſulky*, and refuſe to anſwer you."

"An

"An admirable expedient!" cried he, "I give you infinite credit for its ingenuity! This is what may truly be called *turning a quarrel to good account.* Pray where did you learn this politic art?"

"*Neceſſity*, I ſuppoſe, taught it me," anſwered Clarentine laughing, "for it is not one of thoſe qualifications I ſhould be willing to aſcribe to *Nature.*"

"Conſider then, how much you are indebted to *me*, as the prime agent of this all-inſpiring neceſſity, for calling forth ſuch talents!"

"About as much," reſumed Clarentine with quickneſs, "as any other perſecuted being is, to the tormentor that ſtimulates its exertions by firſt awakening its fears!"

"I may then really triumph in the certainty of having made you afraid of me?"

"Not abſolutely; ſince I can yet only do you the honour to acknowledge that you are the *cauſe*, but by no means the *object* of my fears?"

Then obſerving that Mrs. Hertford ſat liſtening to all that paſſed with the moſt earneſt attention, ſhe felt anxious to give an immediate turn to the converſation; and

and for that purpoſe addreſſing herſelf to her, without giving Eltham time to purſue the ſubject, ſhe ſaid—

"May I take the liberty, madam, of aſking how you firſt heard of my intended removal? I ſhould be curious to know who it is, that in this place thinks ſo inſignificant a being as I am of ſufficient conſequence, to take the trouble of enquiring into any of my actions."

"My intelligence," anſwered Mrs. Hertford, "was not procured here, but came immediately from London, in a letter I yeſterday received from Miſs Barclay, the young lady, who, with her mother, now reſides at Mr. Lenham's."

Amazed to find her ſo well acquainted with names ſhe had always ſo carefully avoided mentioning, either before her or Eltham, Clarentine, unable to command her firſt emotion, haſtily exclaimed—

"Good God!"

Then, as ſuddenly recollecting herſelf, with more compoſure added, "You are well acquainted with Miſs Barclay then, madam? Is ſhe amiable?"

"Yes, extremely," anſwered Mrs. Hertford.

"And

"And pray," resumed Clarentine, hesitating and fearful, yet anxious, before she herself became a member of it, to know exactly upon what footing Mrs. Hertford was in Mr. Lenham's family; "Pray, madam, may I without impertinence enquire, whether you have been intimate long with this young lady, and whether you are also acquainted with the excellent Mr. Lenham?"

"With the latter," answered Mrs. Hertford, "but very slightly. Mrs. Castleton, a particular friend of mine, has a boy, the brother of that little girl you have seen with me here, under his care, and when she has called to see the child, I have occasionally accompanied her, and by that means obtained a trifling knowledge of him. With Miss Barclay, however, I have been in habits of confidence, and in constant correspondence these four or five years."

This answer, circumstantial as it was, still but imperfectly satisfied Clarentine. There were yet a thousand questions she wished to ask, a thousand doubts she longed to have explained, which, however, her delicacy and fear of offending withheld

withheld her from uttering. That a woman, whom Eltham allowed himſelf to excite ſuch ſuſpicions of, to whom he ventured to ſpeak ſo cavalierly, and who to Clarentine herſelf appeared ſo ill-formed to excite a laſting friendſhip; that ſuch a woman ſhould be the choſen inmate of ſo near a relation of the reſpectable Mr. Lenham's, ſeemed incomprehenſible! Much, however, did the circumſtance, extraordinary as it was, tend to eradicate, or at leaſt diminiſh, the prejudice ſhe had hitherto harboured againſt her; and naturally candid, diſpoſed to ſee every thing in the moſt favourable light; and, as all ingenuous minds are, averſe to crediting the *worſt* in a *doubtful* caſe, ſhe perſuaded herſelf to believe, that Eltham had either been groſsly miſinformed, or elſe influenced by private pique in all that he had inſinuated.

When therefore, after a viſit, like both her former ones, of conſiderable length, Mrs. Hertford roſe to take leave; Clarentine, whoſe feeling and excellent heart reproached her for her paſt coldneſs, and urged her to make reparation for it, went up to her, and with infinite ſweetneſs renewing

newing her thanks for the obliging offer that had brought her, apologized for never having waited upon her during the time ſhe had been at Sidmouth, and expreſſed great concern that it would now, owing to the ſhortneſs of her ſtay, be wholly out of her power.

"I hope then," ſaid Mrs. Hertford, with a look that ſhewed her much pleaſed, "you will make me amends when you get to town?"

So ſaying, ſhe made ſomething between a *bow* and a *curtſey* to Eltham, ſhook hands with Clarentine, left her compliments for Madame d'Arzele, and with an air of even girliſh vivacity, haſtened away.

The moment ſhe was gone, Eltham, as it was evident, would have poured upon Clarentine a torrent of queſtions, not wholly unmixed with reproaches for a reception his pride ſtill ſo much reſented, had ſhe allowed him opportunity; but aware of his deſign, and equally averſe to hearing either the one, or the other, ſhe induſtriouſly evaded giving him any ſatisfactory information, and ſought by ſo many little artifices to elude his interrogatories,

tories, and give the converſation a general turn, that although he could not again, with any appearance of reaſon, complain of her, as ſhe neither teſtified any peculiar anxiety to eſcape from him, or any degree of reſerve that could in common ſenſe offend him, he very ſoon loſt all patience, and determined upon quitting her, to ſeek elſewhere that intelligence, which every inſtant encreaſed his deſire of obtaining.

As ſoon as he had left her, haſtening up to Madame d'Arzele to conſult with her about the plan mentioned by Sophia, relative to her journey as far as Exeter, and to ſolicit her acquieſcence to it, ſhe, the next minute, ſat down, firſt to inform Lady Delmington of the ſucceſs of her application, and then, to appriſe Mr. Lenham of the exact time at which he might expect her. With regard to the charge, however, concerning Eltham, as ſhe wiſhed to diſcuſs that ſubject with Sophia only, and was by no means certain her mother knew of the reports that had been circulated reſpecting him, ſhe deferred ſaying any thing that could lead to that circumſtance, as well as writing to

Lady

Lady Julia, till after her arrival in London; when for the one ſhe would have more leiſure, and for the other more materials.

CHAP. III.

THE morning at length arrived, ſo much dreaded by Madame d'Arzele, and ſo dejectedly anticipated by Clarentine, which, after a reſidence together that had been productive of ſo much comfort to both; that had ſo cloſely united them to each other, and eſtabliſhed a habit of confidence between them ſo grateful to their hearts, was deſtined to ſeparate and divide them. They parted with tears on both ſides; and with the ſincereſt expreſſions of attachment, earneſtly renewed their mutual promiſes of writing with punctuality and diligence.

At Exeter, whither Clarentine was conveyed in leſs than three hours, ſhe found the good Mrs. Newnham, who had ſlept there the preceding night, in readineſs, at the

the Inn door, to receive and welcome her. They repaired together into the houſe, where, after taking ſome refreſhment, Clarentine haſtily wrote a few lines to thank Madame d'Arzele for the attendance of her woman; whom, ſending for into the parlour, ſhe very generouſly rewarded for her trouble, and then diſmiſſed, with a thouſand kind meſſages to her miſtreſs, and a thouſand affectionate remembrances to the children.

When this buſineſs was concluded, ſhe turned to Mrs. Newnham, and telling her ſhe was ready to ſet out, aſked how they were to travel.

"My Lady's opinion ma'am," anſwered Mrs. Newnham, "was, that your ſafeſt method, as you have no man ſervant to attend you, would be, to wait here till the Plymouth ſtage arrives, and if there is room, to proceed the reſt of the way, or at leaſt as far as Saliſbury in that; there, if you find yourſelf fatigued, we may ſleep to-night, and continue our journey in the coach that ſets out from thence, to-morrow."

Clarentine immediately agreed to this plan; and on enquiry, finding the ſtage

was expected in every minute, held herſelf in readineſs to get into it, and deſired the waiters would let her know as ſoon as it arrived.

Whilſt this was paſſing, Mrs. Newnham had been giving orders in the paſſage concerning the baggage ſhe had brought with her; and was ſtanding to ſee it all conveyed down ſtairs out of her own room, whither ſhe had inſiſted upon its being depoſited the night before; when Clarentine, drawn to the door by the noiſe and buſtle of this removal, ſtared with amazement at the number of trunks and boxes ſhe beheld, and haſtily exclaimed—

"Why, my dear Mrs. Newnham, you have made preparations for a very long abſence! What ſtay do you purpoſe to make in London?"

"Bleſs you, ma'am!" cried the good woman, "theſe things are not a quarter of them mine; they chiefly belong to you."

"To me!" thought Clarentine, ſighing, "Ah! then, I am an *outcaſt* indeed!"

She drew nearer to the place where they ſtood, however, and examining the direc-

directions, ſaw, with increaſed concern, as a proof of the long exile to which ſhe was doomed, that they were actually almoſt all addreſſed to her, in Lady Delmington's own hand, at the Rev. Mr. Lenham's, and by their ſize and number ſeemed to contain not only her books, the repeated gifts of Mr. Somerſet, but every thing elſe of any value ſhe had left behind her.

The ſight, from the croud of diſtreſſing reflections to which it gave birth, made her melancholy, and turning away with an aching heart, ſhe went back into the room, where, perceiving a newſpaper lying upon the window-ſeat, ſhe took it up till the coach arrived, and ſat down to look it over.

One of the firſt articles that caught her attention was the following:—

"A few days ago died, at his ſeat in Northamptonſhire, Thomas Somerſet, Eſq. Member of Parliament for Higham Ferrers, and one of the wealthieſt private gentlemen in the county. His ſon, a very gallant and diſtinguiſhed young officer in the navy, and ſole heir to all his father's property, is ſhortly ex-

pected in England, after a long ſtation in the Weſt Indies."

Though it is not to be ſuppoſed the news of a man's death by whom ſhe had been ſo cruelly neglected, whoſe general character was ſo unamiable, and who had long been ſuch a ſtranger to her ſight, could very deeply affect her, yet, as all expected intelligence of mortality uſually does, at the firſt moment, it ſhocked, if it did not grieve her, and led to ſuch a train of mournful reflections upon the ſubject of all the infantine connections ſhe had thus early loſt, that, depreſſed as ſhe was before, the tears ſtarted into her eyes, and ſhe laid the paper down unable to proceed.

The entrance into the inn yard of the coach ſhe had been expecting now, however, afforded her ſome relief, and by directing her attention to the more immediate concerns of the moment, contributed to diſſipate the ſadneſs with which ſhe was oppreſſed. Mrs. Newnham inſtantly haſtened out to ſpeak to the driver, and to endeavour to ſecure the two vacant places ſhe required; which having happily effected, ſhe preſently returned

to

to announce her ſucceſs to her young fellow-traveller; with whom, in a ſhort time afterwards, ſhe aſcended the carriage, and drove away.

Loaded as it was with *outſide* paſſengers, fortunately for Clarentine, it contained but one in the *inſide*, except herſelf and Mrs. Newnham. That one, in appearance ſcarcely ſuperior to a common ſailor, coarſe, rough and ſturdy, was yet, to his preſent companions, at leaſt, perfectly inoffenſive; ſeeming far more inclined to ſleep than to intrude upon them his converſation; and, after the firſt *full ſtare* with which (not without betraying ſome indications of ſurpriſe and complacency) he favoured Clarentine, evincing no further inclination to obſerve or moleſt her.

Becoming, therefore, ſhortly familiarized to his uncouth aſpect, which, on her firſt entrance, had ſtartled and almoſt terrified her, Clarentine, whoſe thoughts now again involuntarily reverted to the intelligence reſpecting Mr. Somerſet ſhe had ſo accidentally met with, communicated it in a low voice to Mrs. Newnham, and expreſſed the deepeſt concern for the

melancholy ſurpriſe, that, on his return after ſo long an abſence, awaited his ſon; a ſon, ſhe added, who, however unlike his father, would ſtill, ſhe was perſuaded, feel the ſincereſt ſorrow at a death ſo ſudden and ſo unexpected.

To this, Mrs. Newnham, although a good and a well-principled woman, found ſome difficulty to agree; not thinking it poſſible, nay, even natural, that the beſt of ſons ſhould experience any real grief at the loſs of ſuch a father.

"You know not, my dear Miſs Clarentine," continued ſhe, "you know not what ſhocking accounts I have heard of his ſelfiſhneſs, his illiberality, and his total want of affection; nor how often I have been aſſured that, but for his pay as being in the navy, Captain Somerſet—"

At the mention of Somerſet's name, the ſailor who ſat oppoſite to Clarentine, and who for ſome time had been lounging back in the coach, his eyes entirely cloſed, his arms folded, and his head reclined upon his breaſt, as if ſunk in a heavy ſtupor, ſuddenly bent forward with a look of mingled incredulity and amaze-

ment,

ment, and earneſtly fixing Mrs. Newnham, bluntly exclaimed—

"What's that—what's all that there you're ſaying? Do *you* know Capt. Somerſet?"

"Yes," anſwered ſhe, half ſmiling, "I do know one Capt. Somerſet, but perhaps not the ſame you mean."

"Was his name William?" enquired the ſailor, "was he Commander of the —— man of war?"

"He was," replied Mrs Newnham.

"Why then, by jingo!" reſumed he, rubbing his hands with an air of infinite glee, "I've got into right good ſort of company! Captain Somerſet's was the firſt ſhip I ever went on board of, and a plaguy time I thought I ſhould have on't, for I was no younker even then, but a great lubberly lout that knew no more of the matter than an infant, and expected a cat-o'-nine-tails acroſs my back every inſtant. Ne'ertheleſs, he bore with me kindly and patiently; gave me time to learn my buſineſs, and encouragement to do my duty—and has made me take ſuch a liking to a ſeaman's life, that as long as

there's a ſhip afloat, I'll ne'er turn my mind to any other."

Clarentine, much pleaſed with the honeſt frankneſs ſhe began to diſcover in her new acquaintance, and happy to embrace ſuch an opportunity of learning a few of the particulars of Somerſet's profeſſional conduct, now joined in the converſation, and without diſcovering her near affinity to him, obtained from her communicative companion an account, that affected as much as it delighted her. The character he gave of his late Commander, (for he began by ſaying he was no longer in Capt. Somerſet's ſhip,) was that of a man equally remarkable for humanity and for courage; one who in the midſt of danger was dauntleſs and collected; in the hour of ſucceſs, placable and generous; and in the day of ſecurity, mild, patient, and conſiderate.

Praiſe ſuch as this—ſo zealous, yet ſo diſintereſted, drew tears from Clarentine's eyes; encreaſed, if poſſible, the eſteem, admiration, and affection ſhe had always felt for its object; and made her proud of acknowledging her connection with a man whoſe virtues, ſhe thought, reflected

ſuch

ſuch honour upon all who were allied to him.

The firſt inſtant ſhe ſpoke, confeſſed herſelf to be ſo well acquainted with Somerſet, ſo nearly related to him, the voice, demeanor, and whole countenance of the pleaſed, yet aſtoniſhed ſailor, underwent a total revolution. Reſpect and deference took the place of his former roughneſs and familiarity; he ſeemed from that moment to look upon her with a ſpecies of benevolent affection, and never afterwards addreſſed her but with the humbleſt civility and gentleneſs.

At M——, where they ſtopped to dine, and where alſo their fellow-traveller took leave of them, Clarentine and Mrs Newnham had ſcarcely alighted and advanced three ſteps towards the room that was allotted to them, when, from above, in an accent equally well known to both, a man's voice was heard impatiently calling out—

"Waiter! ſend my ſervant up to me, I have been ringing for him this half hour."

"O, Good God!" ſoftly exclaimed Clarentine, precipitating her pace as ſhe

ſpoke, and mechanically ſeizing hold of Mrs. Newnham's arm, "Mr. Eltham is here! For the world I would not have him ſee me!"

The evil, however, was already done. Eltham, whilſt leaning over the banniſters, had caught a tranſient view of her, and flying impetuouſly down the ſtairs, reached the room ſhe meant to take refuge in almoſt at the ſame inſtant ſhe entered it herſelf.

"So, my dear Miſs Delmington," cried he, triumphantly addreſſing her, 'accident has for once been my friend, and, notwithſtanding your barbarous reſerve upon the ſubject of your journey the laſt time I had the honour of ſeeing you, has given me the opportunity I ſo much wiſhed for, of offering you my ſervices upon the road, and of attending you, (at a diſtance, however humble,) up to town!"

"I am ſorry," ſaid Clarentine coldly, "that Mr. Eltham, who, no doubt, ſo well knows the value of every obligation he confers, ſhould, upon this occaſion, have made choice of one, ſo ill diſpoſed to accept

cept his offers, or even to thank him for his intentions, as I am."

"The mortifying ungraciouſneſs of this reply," cried Eltham, attempting to laugh, yet evidently much piqued, "might have ſucceeded much better ſome time ago; but of late, Miſs Delmington, you have accuſtomed me ſo often to the ſame kind of ſeverity, that I begin to feel *hardened*, and ſhall very ſhortly become callous to all reproof whatever."

"That," ſaid Clarentine, "I can eaſily believe; and only wiſh it were in my power, with equal facility, to become callous to unprovoked—

Impertinence ſhe would have added, but checking herſelf in time, left the ſentence unfiniſhed, and turned to the window half angry at her own petulance, and half terrified at the effect it might produce.

Before Eltham could ſpeak to her again, however, the ſervant he had been enquiring for made his appearance, and ſoon after they both left the room.

"Thank heaven!" ſaid Clarentine, when they were gone, "I now begin to breathe! But, my dear Mrs. Newnham, if you have any pity, endeavour to haſten

our dinner as much as you can, that we may, if poſſible, get away before Mr. Eltham returns."

Mrs. Newnham, though it was evident ſhe longed to make a thouſand obſervations, and, no doubt alſo, to aſk a thouſand queſtions, immediately obeyed; and as on her re-entrance ſhe was accompanied by a waiter who ſtaid in the room the whole time they were at table, ſhe found it abſolutely impoſſible to utter one direct enquiry; and all others Clarentine eaſily evaded.

Their haſty meal was ſcarcely over, when notice was brought that the coach was ready.

Clarentine, eager to be gone, inſtantly aroſe, and having diſcharged the reckoning, hurried out with the utmoſt expedition, internally congratulating herſelf upon her good fortune in thus eſcaping a ſecond interview with Eltham.

At the coach door, however, what was her ſurprize and chagrin again to behold him!

"Here ſtill?" cried ſhe, with undiſſembled vexation.

"Yes,"

"Yes," replied he, ſmiling as he handed her in, "here ſtill!"

Then likewiſe aſſiſting Mrs. Newnham to mount the ſteep ladder that ſerved inſtead of ſteps, the next moment he aſcended after her, and bade the coachman drive on.

"Drive on?" repeated Clarentine, "No, no, impoſſible! you do not mean to go with us, Mr. Eltham?"

"I do indeed," returned he, enjoying her conſternation, "my man could procure me no poſt-horſes, and I am in haſte to get to town."

Clarentine every inſtant more diſguſted at his dauntleſs aſſurance, and firmly perſuaded his ſtation at that inn on her arrival was the effect of a concerted plan, (formed in conſequence of his having, by ſome unknown means, diſcovered the day on which ſhe meant to quit Sidmouth, and the conveyance by which ſhe was to travel) now determined, in order to prove to him, at leaſt, the ſeriouſneſs of her reſentment, to obſerve the ſteadieſt ſilence ſhe could the whole way, and reſolutely to avoid giving him any further excuſe to provoke, or reproach her.

Eltham,

Eltham, however, was not of a diſpoſition long to ſuffer her to maintain her purpoſe. Anxious to learn the cauſe of the late, and inexplicable change in her behaviour towards him, he began by complaining in the ſtrongeſt terms of the manifeſt injuſtice with which ſhe had treated him—proteſting that he was wholly unconſcious, when her reſerve firſt began, of having in the ſlighteſt degree merited her diſpleaſure; and could no otherwiſe account for it, than by ſuppoſing, ſhe had been prejudiced againſt him by the family at Delmington, and taught by them to aſſume that coldneſs and diſtruſt he ſo deeply lamented.

To this, though by no means pleaſed at his harbouring ſuch a ſuſpicion, Clarentine, firm to her firſt intention, made no reply—and Eltham, after vainly waiting ſome time for an anſwer, thus went on—

"As my ſtay in London will be very ſhort, and I have promiſed to return to Welwyn park as ſoon as the ſhooting ſeaſon commences, my firſt buſineſs will be, on my arrival there, to get this matter ſatisfactorily cleared up. Sir Edgar, it is true," added he, "will not at that

time

time be with his family, but ſhould every other member of it deny the charge, my conjectures will know where to reſt, and the affair may eaſily be decided by means of writing to him to beg he will appoint ſome convenient place where we can diſcuſs it."

Shocked and amazed at this alarming threat, yet unwilling to believe it could have any ſerious meaning, Clarentine now found herſelf compelled to ſpeak, and with great earneſtneſs ſaid—

"Can you then, Mr. Eltham, after the converſation that ſo lately paſſed between us on this ſubject,—when I frankly communicated to you my reaſons for requeſting you to diſcontinue your viſits at Madame d'Arzele's—can you ſtill be unreaſonable enough to require a further vindication? to diſcredit all I ſaid? and to entertain ſuſpicions ſo unworthy, and ſo ill grounded?"

"Had Miſs Delmington," replied he coolly, "condeſcended, after that converſation, to account for the very extraordinary behaviour that followed it—had ſhe informed me what were her motives, on my next viſit, for ſo abruptly flying my

my preſence the inſtant I entered the houſe —had ſhe, in ſhort, uniformly treated me with candour and openneſs, thoſe doubts, thoſe ſuſpicions, had never been excited. As it is—ſince by perſuaſion and entreaty I have ſo ill ſucceeded, I muſt either apply elſewhere, or determine to perſecute and haunt her, till, in *ſelf-defence*, ſhe is compelled to anſwer me."

Then obſerving that poor Mrs. Newnham, notwithſtanding the eager curioſity with which ſhe had attended to the opening of this dialogue, had now, however, overpowered by fatigue, fallen into a profound ſleep, he lowered his voice, and thus, with a ſignificant ſmile, continued—

"Were I permitted to adviſe in ſuch a caſe, I would caution my dear Miſs Delmington not to perſevere too long in her preſent plan, leſt, driving me to extremities, ſhe ſhould urge me to declare open war againſt her, and at once to proclaim myſelf her lover and her perſecutor! Aye," continued he, ſeeing her ſtart and turn pale, "you may look frightened, but ſuch I proteſt to you will be the caſe. I cannot, I *will not* be to

you

you as a common acquaintance! Either then accept me for your friend—reſtore me to that degree of confidence with which you honoured me during the early period of your reſidence at Sidmouth, or, as I ſaid before, make me a paſſionate, but a ſelfiſh—a deſigning lover!"

During this ſpeech, Clarentine, aghaſt and diſmayed, ſtared with unutterable aſtoniſhment at the inſulting ſpeaker, who, ſatisfied with having ſo unequivocally explained himſelf, very compoſedly folded his arms the inſtant he pauſed, and threw himſelf back in his ſeat, exultingly contemplating the conſternation he had occaſioned. She recollected, with trembling apprehenſion, how totally, for the preſent at leaſt, ſhe was in his power; and dreading ſtill further to irritate him by reproaches, made a faint attempt, though filled with the utmoſt indignation, to ſoften and appeaſe him. The words, however, died on her lips; ſhe ſtammered—heſitated—and the next moment burſt into tears.

Eltham at this ſight anxiouſly leaned forward—fixed his eyes on her face with an expreſſion of concern and ſurprize,

and then ſeizing her hand, paſſionately exclaimed—

"Dear, lovely Clarentine! it is yet time to retract! Tell me but that you will forgive me—allow me but to hope my repentance may be followed by your returning friendſhip, and I here for ever abjure all the curſed menaces I ſo madly uttered!"

Clarentine, revived by this aſſurance, now ventured to look up, and ſmiling through her tears, ſaid—

"Were *I*, Mr. Eltham, as vindictive as *you* have ſhewn yourſelf, I ſhould not ſo readily pardon the terror and amazement into which you have thrown me. To prove to you, however, the difference there is between us, I accept your terms, and agree to an immediate peace."

"This generous forgiveneſs," cried Eltham, kiſſing her hand, "is, I acknowledge, very ill deſerved—but ſince it not only proves your placability, but enſures my warmeſt gratitude, let it be as permanent as I hope it is ſincere."

"You diſtruſt its ſincerity, I perceive," ſaid Clarentine, "and with ſome reaſon, after all the ſtrange things you have uttered;

tered; be assured, however, that upon one only condition, you may securely rely upon the good faith with which I mean to observe our treaty."

"I dare not," replied Eltham, "after the mercy you have exercised towards me, refuse subscribing to that condition, whatever it may be; and yet I almost dread to hear it."

"Believe me," said Clarentine, "you have no cause. It is simply this—that immediately on our arrival at Salisbury, you will order a post-chaise to be ready to-morrow morning to convey you separately the rest of the way to London; and afterwards excuse my seeing you again till I am fixed at Mr. Lenham's. Do not," added she, seeing he hesitated, "do not, I beseech you, deny me so trifling a favour, lest you oblige me to question *your* sincerity, as you appear to have questioned *mine*."

After a short internal deliberation, Eltham, at length, acceded to this compromise, and during the remainder of their route together, the most uninterrupted harmony subsisted between them.

Yet

Yet Clarentine, notwithſtanding the temporizing meekneſs with which ſhe had been reduced to ſubmit to his unpardonable preſumption, was not of a diſpoſition to think of it lightly, or lightly to forget it. Retired as had been her paſt life, ſhe ſtill was ſufficiently acquainted with the rules and cuſtoms of ſociety, to know how to eſtimate his conduct; and, at once to perceive and feel its impropriety. That her unprotected ſtate ſhould be ſuch as to expoſe her ſo peculiarly to ſuffer by it, ſhe deeply lamented; and ſhrunk with timid deſpondency from a world, in which it was likely her poverty and dependance might lead to a repetition of ſuch humiliating treatment. Still however, ſhe meant punctually to fulfil her promiſe, and, as ſhe had agreed, occaſionally to receive him after her arrival in town; but never when alone, or when unſupported by the preſence of ſome perſon whoſe age, or ſituation, would enſure deference and command reſpect.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

IT was ſo late when the coach drove into the city of Saliſbury, that Clarentine, wearied and diſpirited by the reluctant exertions ſhe had made to appear eaſy and chearful during the latter part of the evening, felt anxious to retire for the night the inſtant ſhe alighted; being told, however, that it would take ſome time to prepare a room for her reception, ſhe ſubmitted to neceſſity with the beſt grace ſhe could; and whilſt Mrs. Newnham went up ſtairs with the chambermaid, to ſee that every thing was properly arranged, conſented, at Eltham's recommendation, to order tea in preference to the more ſubſtantial repaſt that had been ſet before them: but which ſhe had declined partaking.

Drawing a chair to the ſide-table on which the tea equipage had been placed, and ſeating himſelf oppoſite to her, Eltham, as ſoon as the waiter left the room, ſaid—

"Pray, Miſs Delmington, when is Captain Somerſet expected in England?"

"Would I could tell!" anſwered Clarentine with earneſtneſs.

"You ſpeak feelingly upon the ſubject," returned Eltham gravely, "and yet, you were ſo young when he laſt embarked, that you cannot retain much recollection of him?"

"Oh, do not think ſo!" reſumed ſhe, with quickneſs; "he left an impreſſion upon my memory never to be eraſed. Good, noble, and benevolent as he is, who that has once known, can ceaſe to remember, or ceaſe to honour him?"

Eltham, inexpreſſibly ſtruck by the energy and warmth with which this was uttered, remained thoughtful and ſilent for ſome minutes after ſhe pauſed, attentively regarding her; then reſuming all his wonted impetuoſity, he abruptly cried out—

"With a heart ſo alive to ſentiments of gratitude and admiration, why—oh, why, cruel Clarentine! are you thus inacceſſible to love! Tell me," added he, leaning forward, and fixing her yet more intently,

tently, "tell me, why ſhould you drive me from you? Why ſhould we ever part?"

"Mr. Eltham," replied Clarentine, greatly alarmed at this returning vehemence, "is it generous, is it manly, to take advantage of the defenceleſs ſituation in which I am now placed, thus to harraſs and oppreſs me? Oh, do not force me to hate you! do not oblige me to recall that pardon you ſeemed ſo anxious to obtain: and inſtead of the friend you taught me to expect, compel me to look upon you as the moſt cruel of enemies!"

"By heaven," exclaimed he, with fervour, "you do me wrong! Friendſhip—nay, even love itſelf, were too cold a name by which to expreſs the ſentiment I feel for you! I offer you my heart; I dedicate to you my fortune and my life! You are the moſt facinating, the moſt lovely of human beings, and whilſt I have breath, I will protect, cheriſh, and adore you!—Deareſt, gentleſt Clarentine! do not repulſe—do not drive me to deſperation!"

Struggling to withdraw her hand, which during this ſpeech, he had ſeized, and forcibly

forcibly detained, Clarentine, unable to refrain from tears, dejectedly ſaid—

"In pity, in humanity, ſpare me, Mr. Eltham! I am not in ſpirits to ſupport all this; you know not how you wound, how you diſtreſs me!—Oh! had you the feeling heart of that generous, conſiderate Somerſet, you juſt heard me commemorate, never would you have tortured me by treatment ſuch as this!"

"Cold-hearted, inhuman girl!" cried he, colouring with reſentment, and inſtantly releaſing her, "What a reproach was that! Was it thus you anſwered Delmington's ardent proteſtations? Was it thus you upbraided, ſcorned, rejected *him*?—No; you heard him with compaſſionating ſenſibility, wept over his romantic letters, defended him with zeal, and conſoled him with kindneſs! This, all this you could do for a boy, a fool, who betrayed himſelf, and you; whilſt I—I, who would ſacrifice my life to obtain one ſmile, to gratify the ſlighteſt of your wiſhes—I, who love you even to diſtraction, am contemned, ſlighted and diſdained! Oh! Clarentine," added he, paſſionately ſtriking his forehead, and abruptly

rapidly rising, "take care, take care you try me not too much!"

Clarentine now more alarmed than she had yet been, by the outrageous violence of this intemperate madman, afraid of betraying her resentment, and equally afraid of exasperating him by her silence, clasped her hands fervently together, and looking after him with a supplicating aspect, called out in an agony of distress—

"Mr. Eltham, for heaven's sake, for mercy's sake, leave me till you are more composed—leave me for to-night! You will kill me if you stay and thus persevere in terrifying me so cruelly!"

Eltham, however, incapable of attending to, or of answering her, was walking with hurried steps about the room in an agitation of mind too great to be described. His countenance by turns expressive of fierceness, gloom, or disappointment, had lost all traces of that carelessness and good-humour, by which it was usually distinguished. Ashamed of himself, and angry with Clarentine, he knew not how to descend to the necessity of making an apology, with an grace; how to curb his own impetuosity, or how to

attempt retrieving the confidence again thus wantonly forfeited.

Approaching her at length with rather more compoſure, his voice, however, yet betraying the ſtrongeſt ſymptoms of emotion—

"I have gone," cried he, "too far to recede: you *cannot*, a ſecond time, ſincerely pardon me; then why ſhould I be ſo much my own enemy, as to renounce, from a chimerical notion of honour, a falſe principle of rectitude, which even *you* expect me not now to be guided by, the only chance of happineſs I have yet in view, the happineſs of confirming your dependance upon me, though I cannot ſecure your heart!"

"And would *that*," cried Clarentine, darting at him an indignant and contemptuous glance, "would *that* make you happy?"

"Good God!" exclaimed he, "what a look was there!—Oh! ſpeak to me again, dear Clarentine—ſoften to me the rigour of that reproachful glance, and I will do any thing, every thing you command! Say you forgive, and though you blame, alſo pity me, and the conflict ſhall be at an end,

end, I will tear myself from you; for in your presence I can neither act uniformly right, or with impunity wrong!"

Clarentine, completely exhausted by the long contest she had sustained, pale, spiritless, and harrassed, held out her hand almost mechanically, and leaning her head upon the back of a chair, seemed equally averse either to speaking or looking at him.

He received the cold and passive hand she extended, with rapture, tempered by concern at the evident distress he had occasioned; and holding it between both his as he spoke, said in a tone of anxiety and tenderness—

"My dear Miss Delmington, why this total, this solemn silence? Are you ill? Tell me, I beseech you!"

Clarentine shook her head, motioned with her hand for him to leave her, but still did not speak; and Eltham after remaining some minutes longer, irresolutely and fearfully gazing at her, upon her making another signal to him to go, reluctantly obeyed.

It was long ere Clarentine, humbled and depressed by this extraordinary scene,

could conquer the agitation to which it had given riſe, or recover any tolerable degree of ſerenity. The contrition and regret Eltham had evinced at his departure led her, however, to hope ſhe might eſcape the next day without further moleſtation; and calmed by this dependence, ſhe ſought as much as poſſible, before the return of Mrs. Newnham, to diſſipate all remaining traces of chagrin and vexation.

In a very ſhort time, that good woman appeared. Unſuſpicious of what had paſſed, her queſtions, though numerous, were ſuch as Clarentine found it eaſy to anſwer; who having ſtaid with her whilſt ſhe ſupped, gladly conſented the moment, ſhe had finiſhed, to follow her to the room that was allotted her.

Having given orders to be called, by the earlieſt break of day, ſhe aroſe the next morning, and purſued her journey.

Nothing remarkable occurred during the remainder of the way. Eltham appeared no more; and the travellers who now occupied the coach were of that non-deſcript order of beings, of whom little is thought, and neither good or bad can be ſaid.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

AT the inn in London where the ſtage put up, Mr. Lenham himſelf was waiting to receive and welcome his expected gueſt.

The mild, placid, and venerable aſpect of that excellent man, prepared Clarentine, the inſtant ſhe beheld him, to reverence and love him as a father. He addreſſed her with ſuch ſoothing kindneſs, and regarded her with ſuch unaffected benevolence, that ſhe could almoſt have wept her thanks for a cordiality ſo chearing, and ſo conſolatory.

When the firſt hurry of a meeting, which to Clarentine at leaſt had been ſo unexpected, was over, Mr. Lenham, who had kept a hackney coach in waiting, propoſed having it called up, and attending her in it to Hampſtead. To this ſhe readily conſented; and after taking a friendly leave of Mrs. Newnham, whoſe daughter reſided in that neighbourhood, ſhe chearfully followed her reverend conductor.

Their converſation, during the ride, turned chiefly upon the ſubject of Mr. Somerſet's ſudden death, and the unexpected arrival of his ſon. The firſt of theſe was an event, which, although he affected not deeply to lament, Mr. Lenham acknowledged he had been extremely ſurprized at, having, but a ſhort time before, ſeen Mr. Somerſet in town in perfect health and unuſual good ſpirits.

"Had he lived, my dear young lady," added the worthy man, "till you were become an inhabitant of my houſe, I have great reaſon to believe you would have found in him a zealous and ſincere friend. His heart with regard to you ſeemed totally changed; and the kindneſs with which he repeatedly ſpoke of you filled me with the moſt chearing expectations."

"But to what, dear Sir," ſaid Clarentine, extremely ſurpriſed, "could ſuch a change be owing? Many years have elapſed ſince he laſt ſaw me, and he can ſcarcely have heard me mentioned ſince his ſon's departure."

"We all, my young friend," replied Mr. Lenham, "require ſomething to love, ſome one on whom to beſtow that

place

place in our hearts, which the abſence of thoſe we moſt fondly cheriſh has left vacant and unoccupied. Such," continued he, "was the caſe with your deceaſed uncle. He never approved his ſon's choice of a profeſſion which ſo wholly counteracted his own views, and ſo long removed him from his ſight; and, till lately, ſpent every interval between that ſon's departure and his return, in ſolitude and repining. By degrees, however, this chearleſs retirement became irkſome to him; he came oftener to town; mixed more in ſociety; and as the ſpecies of miſanthropy he had indulged wore off, looked round with anxiety for ſome object on whom, in his declining days, he could beſtow his affection, and reſt his hopes of domeſtic comfort. At that time *you*, Miſs Delmington, were brought to his remembrance. I announced to him your intended removal to town; and from the very inſtant he heard of it, he ſeemed to be revolving in his own mind the means of obtaining in you that companion he had elſewhere ſo vainly ſought."

Clarentine, as much affected as ſhe was aſtoniſhed at this account, could not but

ſincerely regret, that, at the very time he ſeemed moſt favourably diſpoſed towards her, ſhe ſhould thus have been deprived of a relation, whom it would have given her ſuch unſpeakable ſatisfaction to have known, to have loved, and to have been permitted to attend. She reproached herſelf ſeverely for every harſh expreſſion ſhe might ever have uttered concerning him; and forgetting his long neglect, to think only of his intended kindneſs, ſunk, in her gratitude for what was *deſigned*, the remembrance of what had been *omitted*.

Whilſt theſe reflections ſtill occupied her mind, and filled it with the trueſt concern, the carriage ſtopped at Mr. Lenham's gate, and the coachman having rung, a maid ſervant ran out with a candle in her hand to light them into the houſe. Clarentine's heart failed her as the moment drew near that was deſtined to introduce her to the ſtrangers ſhe was henceforward to reſide with; and lingering purpoſely as ſhe croſſed the little court before the door, ſhe ſtopped at the bottom of the ſteps, and ſaid with a half ſmile—

"It

"It is very fooliſh, but indeed Mr. Lenham I am almoſt afraid of venturing farther."

Mr. Lenham laughed at her apprehenſions, yet with great kindneſs ſaid—

"Shall I go in firſt then, and announce your arrival?"

Glad of any reprieve, ſhe eagerly accepted the propoſal, and ſtruggling to gain courage during his abſence, was able when he returned to accompany him into the room with tolerable compoſure.

The party to which ſhe was now preſented, conſiſted of Mrs. Barclay, the actual ſuperintendant of the houſe, her daughter, a neighbouring lady of the name of Denbigh, and a very fine boy of about fourteen, a pupil of Mr. Lenham's, and the eldeſt of the three he had then under his care.

The uſual formalities attending a firſt introducing being over, Clarentine, when they were all ſeated, ventured to caſt a timid eye around her, and to take a more minute ſurvey, than on her immediate entrance ſhe had dared hazard, of the ſeveral individuals before her.

The firſt who by any ſingularity diſtinguiſhed herſelf, was Miſs Barclay. This young lady, who ſeemed to be about five-and-twenty, and unhappily for her, had ſome pretenſions to beauty, though not of the moſt feminine kind, looked at once vulgar, blunt and familiar. To a complexion naturally *florid* rather than *brilliant*, ſhe added a pair of large black eyes, which in attempting to render expreſſive, ſhe had made fierce, and in trying to give archneſs to, had utterly deprived of all diffidence or ſoftneſs. Her dreſs, the laborious reſult of indefatigable pains and trouble, was at leaſt as far as ſhe knew how to make it ſo, faſhionable even to extravagance; and betrayed ſuch a total want of taſte, and an affectation of negligence ſo evidently ſtudied, that, to Clarentine, who, novice as ſhe was, had never before beheld ſo extraordinary a figure, ſhe appeared more like a monſtrous caricature, intended to excite ridicule and ſurpriſe, than any other thing ſhe could compare her to.

With regard to her mother, Mrs. Barclay, little in reſpect to her exterior, at leaſt, could be ſaid. Her face was uncommonly

commonly plain indeed, but there was nothing ſtrikingly remarkable either in her perſon or dreſs. Confined during the greateſt part of her life to the country, and compelled whilſt there, from the ſlender circumſtances of her deceaſed huſband, to undergo all the rural drudgery of a farmer's wife, ſhe had neither had time, or inclination, to attend to the forms of cultivated ſociety—to enjoy a rational converſation—or to participate in the pleaſures of domeſtic tranquility. Her mind, when at home, had regularly been in one continual *economical ferment*; when abroad, caſting all care behind her, ſhe thought only of indemnifying herſelf, by *jollity* and *frolic*, for the time ſhe had loſt, and the fatiguing round of houſehold occupations to which, at other ſeaſons, ſhe had been obliged to ſubmit. Her long ſecluſion from the world had contracted her ideas; given a ſpecies of boiſterous roughneſs to her language and manners; and initiated her into all that idle love of goſſip, ſo uſual in a remote village, where the chief recreation of the inhabitants conſiſts in an evening ramble from one neighbour to another, to enquire

into the ſcandalous anecdotes of the day, comment upon, and exaggerate every circumſtance as it is related.

Mrs. Denbigh, their viſitor, was a quiet, grave, elderly woman, very ſimple in her manners, and extremely well-bred in her converſation. Clarentine, however, notwithſtanding the apparent gentleneſs which ſeemed to characterize her, fancied ſhe could diſcern in the caſt of her eyes a latent propenſity to ſatire, which made her ſhrink from their inveſtigation, and innocent as was her heart, dread becoming the object of their penetrating ſcrutiny.

The youth, whoſe name was Blandford, was the ſon of a wealthy Eaſt Indian. He had been in England about four years, and on his firſt arrival had been put into a public ſchool; from whence, however, chuſing ſhortly afterwards to run away, he had ſince been placed by his friends under the care of his preſent tutor; with whom he had now lived near four years in perfect diſcipline and order.

Such was the party which Clarentine, on her arrival, found aſſembled. Revived, and comforted by the attentive

kindneſs

kindneſs of Mr. Lenham—amuſed by the novel appearance of Miſs Barclay—and rejoiced once more to find herſelf in a place of ſecurity, ſhe very ſoon forgot her fatigue, and inſenſibly aſſumed ſuch an air of chearfulneſs and ſerenity, that her friendly hoſt beheld the change with delight, and felt more than ever diſpoſed to intereſt himſelf in her fate—to love, and to protect her.

The lateneſs of the hour at which the fair traveller arrived, naturally precluded all poſſibility of entering into any very regular converſation before ſupper; and whilſt they were yet at table, Mrs. Denbigh's ſervant being announced, in a few minutes ſhe took leave, and the whole party ſhortly afterwards retired for the night.

The room that had been appropriated to Clarentine, though not very large, ſhe found on waking the next morning, was light, chearful, and airy. Its windows looked into the garden; beyond which, only ſeparated from it by a ſunk-fence, was a meadow, encircled by a gravel walk, and ſecurely ſheltered, as well from obſervation as from cold, by a high and impenetrable

impenetrable hedge. At the back of this room was a large cloſet, with a bow window, that reached the floor, and opened like a folding door into an old-faſhioned balcony, fupported by the ſame pillars that formed a ſort of portico before the entrance of the houſe.

In this cloſet, which had a fire-place, and a door, (in addition to the one that ſeparated it from her bed-room, which led into the paſſage, Clarentine, looking round her with delight, anticipated the many happy hours ſhe ſhould ſpend, when having placed her drawing materials and her books in order, ſhe might wiſh to eſcape either from the buſtle or reſtraint which viſitors impoſe.

Whilſt yet indulging herſelf in forming plans ſuch as theſe, ſhe heard ſomebody enter the next room, and, turning round, beheld Miſs Barclay—

"Well," cried that young lady, ſeating herſelf as ſhe ſpoke, and drawing the dreſſing-glaſs to the ſide of the table to reform ſome error in the ſet of her cap, "how did you ſleep?—I'm dying for my breakfaſt—a'n't you?"

Clarentine,

Clarentine, a little ſurprized at this eaſy *debut*, ſmiled, and ſaid—"I have ſcarcely had time to think of it yet; I am but juſt dreſſed."

"O, nor I neither: but then, you know, when one has been worried up ſo, it's horrid to be kept waiting. I dare ſay, however, my uncle won't be ready this half hour, for he's packing up ſuch a load of things!"

"Packing up? where is he going then?"

"Lord, don't you know? A letter came here this morning, before any of us were awake, from ſome of the people who were preſent at the opening of Mr. Somerſet's will, to ſay my uncle muſt go down there directly, for it was found he had been appointed one of the executors, and no buſineſs could go on without him."

"I am afraid then," ſaid Clarentine, "we ſhall not ſee him again for ſome time. Will he breakfaſt with us?"

"O, yes—it's on his account the breakfaſt is ſo delayed."

"Then pray," reſumed Clarentine, "let us go down; I ſhould wiſh to ſee all I can of him before he ſets out."

"Lord,"

"Lord," ſaid Miſs Barclay, indolently riſing, and ſtill lingering before the glaſs, "one would think he was your lover, by the anxiety you expreſs about him."

"I hope," ſaid Clarentine, moving towards the door, "to find in him a *friend*, and that perhaps may be *better* than a *lover*."

"I am ſure," cried Miſs Barclay—"I ſhould not think ſo!"

And with theſe words, ſhe followed Clarentine out, and leaving the room-door wide open, bruſhed paſt her upon the ſtairs, and ran forward to ſee if her uncle was come down.

This mixture in the manners of her new companion of the rudeneſs of an unformed romp, and the freedom of a pert coquette, at once aſtoniſhed and offended Clarentine ſo much, that ſhe determined henceforward, however civil and acquieſcent ſhe might be when they met below, to diſcourage, as well by the coldneſs of her looks, as the whole tenour of her behaviour, the forwardneſs that led her thus to intrude into her private apartment.

"And this," thought ſhe, "as much for her own ſake as mine, ſince I greatly fear,

fear, I ſhould never have philoſophy ſufficient to endure her continually in my ſight without being ſometimes in danger of affronting her.

At the parlour door, ſhe was met by Mr. Lenham—

"My dear young lady," ſaid he, taking her hand, "Lucy has probably acquainted you with the haſty ſummons I have received. It hurts me, ſo immediately upon your arrival, to be under the neceſſity of leaving home: but the buſineſs I go upon is of a nature, I truſt, to plead with you my excuſe."

"O, Sir," ſaid Clarentine, "if in addition to the thouſand other cares that muſt occupy your mind at ſuch a moment, you were to ſuffer yourſelf to be diſturbed by one thought relative to *me*, I ſhould be inconſolable. All I have to wiſh is, that your abſence may be ſhort, and that you may return to us in health and ſpirits."

"Thank you, my young friend," ſaid he—"the wiſh is like the ſpeaker—benevolent and kind.

Mrs. Barclay, at that moment entering the room, put an end to the ſubject, and Mr. Lenham perceiving the chaiſe already

ready at the door, begged to have the breakfaſt haſtened as much as poſſible, and the moment it was over roſe to depart.

When he was gone, the parlour door was ſhut, and Mrs. Barclay, who had been in an enormous buſtle the whole morning, was ſeated—

"Well," cried ſhe, "the day's our own; we have nobody to ſtay at home for, or to conſult; ſo let's agree where we ſhall go to-night.—What ſay you, Miſs Clary," addreſſing Clarentine, "to the play?"

Clarentine ſtared at this unexpected queſtion, and ſaid, ſhe was afraid, after the death of ſo near a relation, it would be very improper for her to appear out of mourning; and at preſent, ſhe had nothing black to wear—

"Pſhaw," exclaimed Miſs Barclay, "What's that ſignify? Nobody will know you!"

"Very true;" replied Clarentine, mildly, "but would there not be a want of decency in making the experiment?"

"Lord, well—you can ſend out for a yard or two of black ribbon to put upon your

your hat; and that, with a white gown, will be quite mourning ſufficient, I'm ſure. You don't wiſh to look like a widow!"

"No," ſaid Clarentine, "neither, to be very ſincere with you, do I wiſh to go out at all."

"And in return, to be equally ſincere with *you*," ſaid Miſs Barclay, forcing a ſmile, "I fancy, Lady-Fair, you have been a good deal accuſtomed to have your own way; hav'n't you?"

"No," anſwered Clarentine, "I have not indeed; and to the prejudice of another, ſorry ſhould I be if I ever had. As this is a matter, however, which intirely concerns myſelf, and it would give me great uneaſineſs were my determination to influence yours; ſuffer me, this once, to be guided by my own feelings, and forbear to preſs the ſubject further."

"Oh, certainly! Only you will excuſe my ſaying, I think you rather *odd!*"

"Perhaps," returned Clarentine, good-humouredly, "I might be tempted to ſay the ſame of *you*, if I knew how to put ſuch an obſervation into very civil language."

To this, Miſs Barclay, not comprehending, perhaps, the full extent of her meaning, made no reply, and Clarentine, ſoon after, went up ſtairs to write letters, and to unpack her trunks.

Theſe occupations, quick and diligent as ſhe was, employed her till near dinner time, when, at her own door, juſt as ſhe was going down to beg one of the ſervants might be ſent to the poſt with her letters, ſhe was met by Miſs Barclay, out of breath with ſpeed, who haſtily called out—

"Lord, my dear creature! there's one of the moſt faſhionable, handſome young men below, enquiring for you, I ever ſaw in my life!"

"For me?" cried Clarentine, "and pray what is his name?"

"Indeed," replied her imperfect, but enraptured informant, "I can't tell, for the maid blundered it out ſo, it was impoſſible to underſtand her; however, he came on horſeback, and upon one of the fineſt, ſpirited animals you ever beheld. Do pray come down."

So ſaying, ſhe flew back herſelf, leaving Clarentine fully perſuaded this dazzling

zling equeſtrian could be no other than Eltham in perſon. The conviction, however, gave her no ſort of eagerneſs to make her appearance; but on the contrary, (had ſhe been aſſured, that by delay ſhe could have driven him from the houſe without ſeeing him) would have induced her moſt undoubtedly to have remained where ſhe was till ſummoned down to dinner; but this ſhe feared it was hopeleſs, with ſuch a man as Eltham, to expect; and dreading his becoming too well acquainted with the family, leſt he ſhould be perpetually at the door, ſhe only ſtopped to deliver her letters to the maid, and then, however unwillingly, directed her ſteps towards the parlour.

As ſhe entered, and ſaw that it was indeed Eltham who waited for her, the recollection of all that had paſſed at their late meeting recurring moſt forcibly to her mind, died her cheeks with crimſon, and utterly bereft her of either power or inclination to ſpeak.

Not ſo, the intrepid Eltham. Conſcious he might feel, it is true, but far from betraying it, he addreſſed her with the ſame unembarraſſed gaiety he would have done during

during the firſt period of their intimacy at Sidmouth;—rallied her upon her gravity, and proteſted the air of London, ſhort as had been her reſidence in its vicinity, had began already to exert its baleful influence over her.

"Lord, how ſhould it be otherwiſe?" cried Miſs Barclay: "She has been ſhut up all day in her own room—won't go any where even of an evening—and ſeems determined to mope herſelf to death!"

"Alas! my dear madam," cried Eltham, in a tone of affected commiſeration, "you will find her, I fear, a very untractable creature! I wiſh you well through it; but as for *me*, I would not undertake the management of her for the world! I never could gain any one point with her in my life!"

"Try, however,"—reſumed Miſs Barclay, "we want her to go to the play to-night, and becauſe ſhe has not got all her mourning ready for an old uncle whom ſhe hardly ever ſaw—ſhe declares ſhe can't. Now do you think, Sir, that in a play-houſe, all among ſtrangers, this could at all ſignify?"

"Certainly not," anſwered Eltham, gravely, "certainly not; but as I told you before, ſhe is utterly impracticable, and therefore I believe it would be beſt not to contend with her!"

"Well, for my part," ſaid Miſs Barclay, ſhrugging her ſhoulders, and looking reproachfully towards Clarentine, "I would not be of ſo uncomplying a temper for the world!"

"Oh no!" cried Eltham: "With every other privilege that beauty can give, be nobler than your ſex, and never, never, dear madam, exert your power with the degree of inflexibility your proud friend has ſhewn."

"As for that matter," cried Mrs. Barclay, who ſince Clarentine's entrance had hitherto ſat ſilent, "I don't know whether it's her beauty that has made her ſo or not, but Lucy can ſometimes be ſtubborn and proud as well as her neighbours."

"Lord, mama, what a ſpeech!" exclaimed Miſs Lucy, reddening—

"A miſtaken one, I am perſuaded," reſumed Eltham; "ſoftneſs, and complacency are painted in Miſs Barclay's eyes;

every

every look ſpeaks tenderneſs, every motion proclaims"—

"Lord, what rattle!" interrupted Miſs Barclay, turning away with an air of conſciouſneſs, but at the ſame time with a laugh, that ſhewed her by no means offended, "I never heard any body talk ſo in my life."

Whilſt this agreeable converſation, or rather dialogue, was paſſing, the maid, unchecked by Mrs. Barclay, who was by no means accuſtomed to obſerve the formality of retarding ſo neceſſary a buſineſs till her viſitors were gone, had very leiſurely been laying the cloth, and preparing every thing for dinner, which ſhe now informed them was ready, and deſired to know whether ſhe might bring up? "Oh, yes," ſaid her miſtreſs, "call the boys in, and bring it up directly."

Eltham, upon this, directing a very droll look at Clarentine, immediately aroſe, took a reſpectful leave of the whole party, and left the houſe.

"I proteſt," cried Miſs Barclay, who the moment he was gone had flown to the window to ſee him mount his horſe, "it was the rudeſt thing to let him go juſt as dinner

dinner was coming up, without aſking him to ſtay, that ever was done."

"Rude or not rude," returned her mother, very compoſedly taking her ſeat at table, "I could not invite him to eat haſhed mutton with us, and to-day we have nothing better."

"Well, I hope he'll come again, however!—But now I think of it," turning to Clarentine, "pray what is his name?"

"Eltham," anſwered Clarentine.

"Eltham!" repeated Miſs Barclay, with an air of mingled ſurpriſe and ſignificancy, "*That's* Mr. Eltham, is it? Oh, I have heard of him."

"Why, what have you heard," cried her mother, "Who is he?"

"He's nephew to Lord Welwyn, and an old acquaintance of Mrs. Hertford's, who has written to me a great deal about him."

"What, I ſuppoſe," cried Mrs. Barclay, laughing, "he's one of Mrs. Hertford's flirts?"

"Oh, no indeed," reſumed the daughter, with quickneſs, "he's flirting juſt now with quite a different perſon."

This ſpeech, which it was impoſſible Clarentine ſhould miſunderſtand, more eſpecially as, at the moment it was uttered, Miſs Barclay glanced her eyes towards her with an expreſſive ſmile, provoked her extremely; but fearing to bring on a long converſation upon the ſubject, ſhe thought it beſt to let it paſs, and went on quietly with her dinner.

As ſoon as they roſe from table, the play ſcheme having been entirely given up, they all walked out into the garden; where Clarentine, much pleaſed with the ingenuouſneſs and good-humour of young Blandford, who attached himſelf cloſely to her the whole way, and appeared to feel irreſiſtibly drawn towards her by the ſweetneſs of her countenance, and the gentleneſs of her manners, remained converſing with him long after the two ladies went back to the houſe, and where ſhe would gladly have remained yet longer, but for the ſummons that called her in to tea.

Being determined not to give offence by betraying an over-anxious ſolicitude to withdraw herſelf from ſociety, Clarentine, as ſoon as candles were ordered, brought down her work, and eſtabliſhed herſelf

herſelf in the parlour for the reſt of the evening.

This little proof of *condeſcenſion*, as Mrs. Barclay, whoſe expreſſions were ſeldom exactly ſuited to the importance or inſignificance of the ſubjects ſhe talked upon, termed it, ſeemed very much to ſoften that lady's heart in her favour, and to inſpire her with a ſentiment of infinitely more cordiality and kindneſs towards her than ſhe had yet felt.

Clarentine ſincerely rejoiced to perceive this change, and already diſpoſed, rough and unpoliſhed as ſhe was, extremely to prefer the mother to the daughter, did every thing in her power ſtill more to increaſe this growing partiality. She read to her, on finding ſhe was diſtreſſed for a new maid, every advertiſement relative to ſervants, that the daily papers of the laſt week contained; heard all ſhe had to ſay concerning the difficulty of procuring domeſtics that could be depended upon, with the moſt exemplary patience; agreed with her in lamenting the dearneſs of proviſions; and in ſhort, ſo completely entered into all her family afflictions, that though ſhe

nearly talked herſelf to ſleep, ſhe ſecurely eſtabliſhed herſelf, as ſhe had reaſon to hope, in Mrs. Barclay's good graces.

Meanwhile, Miſs Lucy, appearing to think this converſation infinitely beneath her, and fully perſuaded Clarentine had engaged in it ſolely for her own amuſement, had, for nobler entertainment, had recourſe to a book of little opera ſongs, which ſhe had ſome time before bought at the play-houſe door. Theſe ſhe ſat negligently turning over, and humming to herſelf the whole evening; never, except it was to fix her eyes upon Clarentine with a look of contemptuous pity, or ſarcaſtic ſurpriſe, deſiſting from her employment a moment.

With whatever ſolicitude ſhe might affect not to perceive theſe airs, it will eaſily be ſuppoſed, that, induſtriouſly as they were perſevered in for near three hours, Clarentine could not fail to obſerve them. The only effect, however, they had upon her mind, was that of leading her ſincerely to compaſſionate her mother—a mother who, unentertaining and uncultivated as ſhe might be, it was ſtill evident

evident poſſeſſed many qualities that rendered her deſerving of a better daughter.

CHAP. VI.

THREE days had now elapſed ſince the departure of Mr. Lenham, and Clarentine, though in that time ſhe had hourly gained ground in the good opinion of Mrs. Barclay, began moſt impatiently to long for his return, when the following letter from himwas brought to her—

MISS DELMINGTON.

Somerſet-Hall, July 26.

" My dear young Friend,

" The intelligence I have to announce to you, it was my wiſh to communicate in perſon, but the probable delays that will protract my return are ſo numerous, that I cannot any longer—poſſeſſing a ſecret which I think it will give your benevolent heart pleaſure to be informed of—permit myſelf to keep you in ignorance.

"Mr. Somerſet's will, you have already heard, has been inſpected. It was drawn up, as is evident by the date, three years ſince, and excepting a few trifling legacies to ſervants, contains nothing that does not relate to his ſon. In a codicil, however, which was added to it ſo lately as within four days of his deceaſe, is a declaration ſtating, that—"In conſideration of Clarentine Delmington's near affinity to his late wife, the teſtator gives and bequeaths, to the ſaid Clarentine Delmington, the ſum of 5000l. the capital of which is to be made over to her without limit or reſtriction, on the day ſhe comes of age; and in the interval between that period and the preſent, to be conſigned to the management and truſt of the Rev. Francis Lenham; whom, in conjunction with his ſon, William Somerſet, he appoints her guardian and truſtee. Moreover, that from the day of his deceaſe, the annual intereſt of the ſame 5000l. amounting to 250l. ſhall be duly paid during her minority to the ſame Clarentine Delmington, out of his perſonal property in the five per cents."

"Now

"Now my excellent young friend, ſuffer me to congratulate you upon this juſt and equitable donation. To a mind diſintereſted, and liberal as I was long ſince taught to believe yours, the value of ſuch an acquiſition, as it relates only to yourſelf, will be ſmall, in compariſon to that it muſt derive as relating to thoſe it may enable you to ſerve; ſince now, although not affluent, you are independent; and with ſufficient to ſupply all your own reaſonable wiſhes, have ſomething to ſpare towards the wants—the equally reaſonable, and far more preſſing, wants of others. How many there are who might envy you this power! and how many more, I fear, who might envy the diſpoſition which I doubt not will lead you thus to exerciſe it!

"But permit me before I conclude, in juſtice to our abſent friend, your guardian now, and always your moſt zealous well-wiſher, to acquaint you with an inſtance of his early affection which, perhaps, may not have come to your knowledge.

"There was a period when he had reaſon to apprehend—and indeed, till lately, who had not?—you might at his

father's deceaſe be leſs favourably remembered. Poor at that time himſelf, at leaſt, comparatively ſo; extremely young, and totally dependent, he had no means of ſecuring you any immediate proviſion: but his generous heart furniſhing him with expedients for the future, although powerleſs at the moment, he formed the noble deſign of binding himſelf, by the moſt irrevocable engagement to enſure to you, on his coming into poſſeſſion of his fortune, a fixed and certain competency. A promiſe to this effect I accordingly drew up for him, put into his hands to ſign, and afterwards, at his own requeſt, ſubſcribed myſelf.

"Upon the legality of ſuch a deed, conſidered as the act of a minor, there was not, I acknowledge, much ſtreſs to be laid: upon the ſcrupulous conſcientiouſneſs, however, with which he meant to ratify it, the firmeſt dependence, I am perſuaded, was to be placed; and therefore complying with the earneſt ſolicitations of the youthful projector, I ſent it to Sir James Delmington, encloſed in a letter which ſtated his motives for conſigning it to his care, and the apprehenſions that had urged him to draw it up.

"What

"What became of this paper I know not, or whether it was ever mentioned to you as being thought worthy of attention. At all events, it ſeemed incumbent upon me to revive the memory of a circumſtance which does ſo much honour to the heart of Somerſet—and which, without wounding your feelings, muſt ſo deſervedly excite your gratitude and ſenſibility.

"Farewel, my amiable young ward. I am impatient to return to you, yet, at preſent, totally unable to decide when that will be. Should you, therefore, have any motive for wiſhing to write to me before the end of the enſuing week, direct to me here, and be aſſured of the punctuality and readineſs with which I ſhall at all times be anxious to execute your commands.

"I remain,

"My dear Miſs Delmington,

"With the moſt affectionate regard,

"Your obedient,

"And devoted humble ſervant,

"F. LENHAM."

Clarentine had rapidly peruſed this letter three ſeveral times before ſhe could perſuade herſelf that what ſhe read was real. Thus ſuddenly, thus unexpectedly to find herſelf in the abſolute poſſeſſion of a fortune which to her moderate and rational mind appeared ſo ample, ſeemed too like enchantment to be believed!—How was ſhe ever to ſpend it? How create to herſelf new wants ſufficient to render it of any uſe? The point was not eaſy to decide, ſince abſurd as it would hitherto have appeared to her, for one inſtant, to have indulged the improbable idea of ever becoming the uncontrouled miſtreſs of ſuch an income, ſhe had not one favourite plan to advert to, or one long-cheriſhed ſcheme, however viſionary it might before have ſeemed, which now ſhe wiſhed to realize.

"This then being the caſe," cried ſhe, ſmiling at the perplexed, and even viſible deliberation in which ſhe had been engaged, "I muſt diſclaim all title to the admiration which is the uſual reward of *generoſity*, and learn to be content with the more humble commendation that follows *juſtice*. In diſpoſing of my ſuper-

abundance

abundance towards the relief of thoſe leſs bounteouſly provided for, I make no ſacrifice, can boaſt no merit, and renounce no gratification. In reality I want nothing, at leaſt, nothing which in my preſent circumſtances a third part of the annual ſtipend I am to receive will not abundantly ſupply. Beyond that, all which I might diſſipate would be unneceſſary, and almoſt criminal. I have no faſhionable connexions; no expenſive purſuits; no extravagant habits: in what then, without torturing my brain to invent new modes of prodigality, in what *could* I (who have ſo long been inured to frugality and retirement) ſpend an income, which to me appears ſo boundleſs and inexhauſtible?"

The reſult of theſe philoſophical, but untutored reflections was, that, without communicating her purpoſe to any one, except Mr. Lenham, whom ſhe thought it her duty upon all occaſions to conſult, ſhe determined immediately to take upon herſelf the diſcharge of the full ſum Lady Delmington now paid for her board and lodging; and then, dividing the reſidue of her whole year's allowance into two

equal portions, to appropriate the one, at leaſt during her preſent exigencies, to the uſe of Madame d'Arzele; and to retain the other, ſtill more than ſufficient to gratify every wiſh ſhe could form, for her own expenditure.

Having decided upon a plan, which thus effectually relieved her from the troubleſome *embarras des richeſſes* in which ſhe had ſo ſincerely dreaded to be involved, Clarentine, with a mind lightened of all its new cares, and a countenance more than uſually animated and glowing, deſcended rather before the accuſtomed hour at which the family was wont to aſſemble to tea, and joined Mrs. Barclay and her daughter in the garden.

The vivacity that ſparkled in her eyes, and the unreſtrained gaiety with which ſhe accoſted them, excited Miſs Barclay's immediate attention; and after ſtaring in her face ſome time with great curioſity, ſhe bluntly exclaimed—

"Why, in the name of wonder, what's come to you this evening? I never ſaw you look ſo lively and merry before. Have you had any good news?"

"Yes,"

"Yes," replied Clarentine ſmiling—"I have had very good news."

"I am glad to hear it," cried Mrs Barclay, "I hope you will tell us what it is."

To this, Clarentine, not foreſeeing the ſtrange conſtruction that might be put upon the uncommon chearfulneſs ſhe had betrayed, and naturally too open and undiſguiſed to have any predilection for unneceſſary myſteries and concealments, readily conſented, and in as few words as poſſible, frankly recapitulated the contents of Mr. Lenham's letter. When ſhe had concluded—

"Upon my word," cried Miſs Barclay drily—"I don't ſo much wonder at your ſprightlineſs now! You have good ſubſtantial reaſons for it; and yet, I don't know how it is, but I ſhould have been tempted to imagine a young lady like you, whoſe refinement and diſintereſtedneſs has been ſo much cried up, would have ſhewn leſs rapture upon ſuch a *worldly occaſion!* I am glad, however, to find there's not that difference between us I thought there was; for to ſpeak the truth, this is exactly the way I ſhould have received ſuch intelligence myſelf."

"Ay,

"Ay, to be ſure;" cried her mother, intending to eſpouſe Clarentine's cauſe, "you don't ſuppoſe Miſs Clary has not ſpirit enough to be pleaſed as much as other people at ſuch a lucky *God-ſend!* For my part, I give her joy on't with all my ſoul; and heartily wiſh ſhe could do the ſame by me!"

A cordial burſt of ſelf-applauſe followed this witty ſpeech; after which, Clarentine not chuſing to enter upon her own vindication, very little more was ſaid that relāted to the ſubject, and they all walked in to tea.

CHAP. VII.

CLARENTINE, aſſured of being leſs unfavourably interpreted by her friends at Delmington than ſhe had been by Mrs. and Miſs Barclay, wrote the next morning a detail of the unexpected communication ſhe had received from Mr. Lenham, and encloſed an extract from his

own

own letter, as a confirmation that ſeemed indiſpenſibly requiſite of the wonderful, and ſcarce credible tale, ſhe aſſerted.

To this letter, a very few days brought her an anſwer, abounding in congratulations the moſt affectionate and cordial, not only from every individual of the family, but from Lady Julia, and her excellent father alſo. As for the warm-hearted Sophia, ſhe ſeemed quite wild with joy—"only," as ſhe confeſſed herſelf—"the idea of Clarentine's being doomed to live with ſuch people as the Barclays diſturbed her beyond meaſure."

"I cannot bear your odious Miſs Lucy," ſhe added—"and can hardly perſuade myſelf even to think with Chriſtian charity of her mama. You ſpeak very cautiouſly about them—yet I can plainly perceive they are the moſt contracted, narrow-minded, vulgar animals that ever were created! How is it poſſible ſuch a poliſhed, amiable man as Mr. Lenham, can endure ſuch creatures in his houſe?—Quit them, for ſhame! and come and live with your charming Madame d'Arzele again. Indeed, indeed theſe

people are not fit ſociety for my Clarentine.

" As for Mr. Eltham, who you tell me has already introduced himſelf at your houſe, I ſuſpect he will have ſome very entertaining dialogues with Miſs Lucy! She promiſes fair to become an admirable butt for him. Pray ſend me a minute account of his behaviour to her; do all you can to perſuade her to fall in love with him; and then, if you deſire effectually to get rid of him, betray her to mama, and council the good lady to prohibit his viſits! You will laugh at this advice perhaps, but I can aſſure you, I ſhould follow it myſelf very exactly, in the ſame circumſtances.

" But *apropos*—I ſcarcely know *de quoi* though, but that is no matter; let me inform you of that dear, delightful Lord Welwyn's enchanting plan for his daughter next ſpring. He means to take her to town for three months, in order to have her preſented, and likewiſe in order to inure her a little to the buſtle and confuſion of the great world, previous to *her marriage*. During the firſt month or ſix weeks of their reſidence in London, Har-

riet, *en droit d'aineſſe*, is invited to be with them; after which, *my* turn is to arrive, and I am to join their party till their return to this place in May. Lady Julia's pretty mouth dimples at this proſpect, when talking of it with me: but at other times, if ſhe ſits and thinks of it alone, her timid heart ſinks with terror at the idea of a ſcene ſo new, an introduction ſo formidable, and a manner of living ſo buſy and ſo perturbed. Not ſo your enraptured Sophia. Having no preſentations to fear (thanks to my obſcurity, and thanks alſo to the *rural* ſtyle of life I ſeem deſtined to lead) all I look forward to is amuſement, and all I anticipate is pleaſure. *Here*, theſe are things I never panted to obtain, becauſe I very well knew they were not to *be* obtained; but *there*, as both are acceſſible, I am fully determined both ſhall be enjoyed! And ſo, farewel my beloved Clarentine, farewel till next April."

Thus concluded this gay and characteriſtic letter. It put Clarentine into ſpirits for the day, and inſpired her with ſo much joy on account of the happy proſpect it held out for the ſpring, that her delight

delight upon the occaſion was ſcarcely inferior to that of Sophia herſelf.

After an abſence of near three weeks, Mr. Lenham at length returned. Clarentine welcomed him on his arrival with the trueſt ſatisfaction; and impatient to make known to him, and to obtain his ſanction of her projected deſigns, ſeized the firſt opportunity, when they were by themſelves, of ſpeaking to him upon the ſubject.

To her intended donation annually to Madame d'Arzele, the nearneſs and dearneſs of that lady's relationſhip to her, and the diſtreſſed ſtate of her actual circumſtances, forbade his making any oppoſition; on the contrary, he applauded her purpoſe with warmth, and aſſured her he entertained not the leaſt doubt of its meeting with the readieſt concurrence from Captain Somerſet.

With regard, however, to her payment of himſelf, during her reſidence at his houſe, he declined ſaying any thing, leaving her to ſettle the matter in whatever way ſhe choſe with Lady Delmington herſelf.

Thus

Thus authoriſed, Clarentine loſt no time in farther conſideration, but arming herſelf with courage for the arduous undertaking, immediately retired to her own room for the purpoſe of writing to Madame d'Arzele.

Her letter, though ſhort, was at once perſuaſive, earneſt, and affectionate: every motive ſhe could urge in favour of her propoſal was ſtrongly dwelt upon, and forcibly pointed out. Eloquent, yet timid; animated, yet reſpectful, by turns ſhe reaſoned, and ſhe ſued, till argument itſelf was exhauſted, and ſupplication could reach no further.

Encloſed in this letter, was a bill for 25l. deducted from the firſt quarterly payment ſhe had received from Mr. Lenham; an equal ſum remained for her own uſe; and the reſt, ſhe determined to lay apart towards the diſcharge of the yearly penſion Lady Delmington had agreed to pay for her.

Her next buſineſs was, to inform that lady herſelf of her deciſion. This, though by no means ſo difficult a taſk as the former, was one, however, that ſtill required the utmoſt delicacy and circumſpection.

Proudly,

Proudly, or ungraciouſly, after all the obligations ſhe had received, to have rejected any further ſervices the inſtant her dependence was at an end, would have evinced a degree of ſelfiſhneſs and ingratitude, of which Clarentine could not bear to be thought capable. Her letter, therefore, though plain and candid, was more humble and more diffident than any ſhe had ever written before.

By return of poſt ſhe received the two anſwers ſhe ſo ardently deſired.

The firſt ſhe opened, that of Madame d'Arzele, affected her ſo deeply before ſhe had proceeded half through it, that ſhe had ſcarce power to read to its concluſion. The impaſſioned gratitude and ſenſibility it expreſſed; the kind and flattering acceptation it contained; and above all, the tender acknowledgments with which it abounded on behalf of the helpleſs babes, to whom ſuch a grant afforded certain maintenance and ſupport, delighted at once, and diſtreſſed the feeling Clarentine almoſt to an equal degree! More than ever, however, did ſhe congratulate herſelf upon the diſpenſation ſhe had made,

and

and more than ever prize the power ſhe had acquired.

Lady Delmington wrote with leſs enthuſiaſm, it will be believed, but ſcarcely with leſs affection. She agreed to her niece's propoſal as to a thing it would be indelicate to oppoſe; yet at the ſame time rallied her with a conſiderable degree of archneſs upon the promptitude with with which ſhe had thought it neceſſary to announce her determination, and good-humouredly cautioned her againſt adding one more, to the too-ample liſt that already exiſted of *proud Delmingtons*.

Clarentine, though ſhe could ſcarcely help laughing, was yet ſorry to have appeared, even in jeſt, to require ſuch a warning. She flattered herſelf, however, that when ſhe wrote again ſhe ſhould be able to prove how little it was neceſſary; and meanwhile, diſcarding from her mind all reflections that could excite uneaſineſs, gave herſelf up without reſerve to the pleaſure that reſulted from the conſciouſneſs of having benefited thoſe ſhe loved, and performed her own part with rectitude.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

SIX weeks had now nearly elapſed ſince Clarentine's arrival at Hampſtead, and except Eltham, who, in that time had repeatedly called, and Mrs. Denbigh, who, ſince the return of Mr. Lenham, often drank tea at the houſe, ſhe had ſcarcely ſeen one individual who did not immediately belong to the family, or ventured beyond the limits of the garden, or the ſmall field that adjoined to it.

One evening, however, being left, at the end of that period, *tête-a-tête* with Miſs Barclay, whoſe mother was gone to London upon buſineſs with Mr. Lenham, ſhe conſented at that young lady's preſſing ſolicitation to accompany her on a more diſtant ramble.

The evening was ſo fine, and, when it contained no company, Miſs Barclay's averſion to the houſe was ſo great, that night was coming on rapidly before Clarentine could perſuade her to turn back; and conſequently when they arrived at their own door it was already completely dark.

Rejoiced,

Rejoiced, however, to have reached home at all, Clarentine, after ſhe entered, ſtaid not to reproach her adventurous companion for her imprudence, but quitting her at the bottom of the ſtairs, turned ſhort into the parlour to look whether any letters had been brought for her during her abſence.

As ſhe opened the door, and was haſtily advancing without any other light than that which a glimmering fire afforded, the tall figure of a man ſtanding up immediately oppoſite to her with his back to the chimney, ſtartled her ſo much, that ſhe was half tempted to run out again. Hearing one of the maids, however, in the paſſage, ſhe called to her, and with as little appearance of alarm as ſhe could, ſaid, in a low voice—

"Is this gentleman waiting for your maſter?"

"Yes Miſs—he came in juſt before you."

Somewhat re-aſſured on finding he had gained *legal admiſſion*, ſhe then ordered candles, intending the moment they were brought to quit the room, and rejoin Miſs Barclay.

Meanwhile,

Meanwhile, the ſtranger, (who in height and figure bore ſo peculiar a reſemblance to Eltham, that ſhe was ſometimes half tempted to think it was Eltham in perſon) had reſigned his ſtation at the fire, and very politely placed a chair for her near it, concluding ſhe meant as well as himſelf to wait there till Mr. Lenham returned.

Clarentine, too much embarraſſed by the aukwardneſs of her ſituation to attempt ſpeaking, only bowed her thanks, without venturing to move from the door, which ſhe held half open in her hand, ready to make her eſcape the moment the maid re-appeared.

A ſilence ſo determined, and ſtill more, the cautious diſtance at which ſhe ſtood, ſeemed to excite the ſtranger's curioſity, for, before the candles could arrive, growing impatient to ſee her face, he once again approached the fire, and gave it ſo effectual a ſtir, that the bright flame into which it burſt out enabled him inſtantly to take a perfect view of her whole countenance, at the ſame time that it likewiſe afforded her an opportunity of examining him.

The

The total ſilence that had preceded this mutual ſurvey was now but of ſhort duration. Clarentine, agitated, and almoſt breathleſs, broke it firſt; and irreſolutely advancing, ſaid in an eager and tremulous accent, whilſt her eyes were intently rivetted on his face—

"Do I deceive myſelf? Can this be real? Are you *indeed* Capt. Somerſet?"

Somerſet (for it was he himſelf) allowed her time to ſay no more. Struck by the earneſt tone of her voice, and the touching ſenſibility that was evident in her countenance, his warm and affectionate heart ſprung forth to meet her, and told him, at once, ſhe could be no other than the dear, the pitied, and ever lovely orphan, whom he had parted from almoſt a child, and now beheld in ſtature and in form, a finiſhed, graceful woman.

"My Clarentine!" cried he, flying towards her, and taking her hand, "my deareſt Clarentine! How little was I prepared for the pleaſure of meeting you here! Do you live with Mr. Lenham? Have you been long in town? Tell me, tell me every thing that relates to yourſelf, and every thing which you may rea-

ſonably ſuppoſe, a wanderer ſuch as I have been, muſt wiſh to know, and feel intereſted in hearing!"

"I will," cried Clarentine, ſmiling at his eagerneſs, "I will moſt readily: but at leaſt ſit down to hear my tale; for ſince you aſk ſo much at once, you cannot expect me to be very brief."

The entrance of the maid prevented her ſaying any more, and checked for a time the enquiries which Somerſet was ſo anxious to pour forth. His eyes, however, during that interval, ſpoke moſt expreſſively, and as he again delightedly regarded her with looks of admiration and ſurpriſe, plainly indicated all the pleaſure he felt, and all the friendſhip he retained.

When once more they were left by themſelves, heſitating a moment, and half-ſmiling, he ſaid, "The longer I ſee you, the leſs I know how to renounce my ancient privileges; and yet, I ought not now to addreſs you thus familiarly, to call you, as in former times, *my Clarentine*, and to treat you with this uncourtly plainneſs. Can you, in conſideration of what I am, a blunt, unpoliſhed ſailor, can you pardon

pardon ſo glaring a ſoleciſm in good manners?"

"Would I could as eaſily pardon," replied Clarentine, a little reproachfully, "your long ſilence, and your breach of promiſe!"

Somerſet's gaiety vaniſhed in a moment—

"Is this," cried he, earneſtly, "a juſt reproach? No, believe me—frequently and conſtantly did I write, not only during my late Weſt-India ſtation, but alſo while yet cruizing in the Mediterranean; to ſome of the earlieſt of theſe letters I even received anſwers, but to all thoſe of later date you have invariably remained ſilent."

Clarentine at the concluſion of this ſpeech looked a little conſcious, and appeared at a loſs what defence to make for herſelf. The fact was, that not having received, ſince he quitted the Mediterranean, any one of the letters he had written, ſhe had grown weary of keeping up ſo languid a correſpondence, and had wholly diſcontinued writing herſelf. This, after ſome heſitation, ſhe honeſtly confeſſed; and peace being then reſtored,

Somerſet earneſtly beſought her to gratify the anxious curioſity he had to know what cauſe had determined her to quit her former reſidence.

Though infinitely averſe to entering fully upon this ſubject, and fearful of drawing upon herſelf the imputation of vanity and conceit, Clarentine ſo far conquered her reluctance, however, as to ſpeak of it, after the firſt moment, with all that candour and openneſs which Somerſet's long friendſhip for her, his near relationſhip, and the intereſt he took in her affairs, entitled him, ſhe thought, to expect. Throwing off all diſguiſe, therefore, ſhe frankly acknowledged that to Sir Edgar's imprudent attachment was alone to be attributed her late removal, and her preſent ſituation.

This confeſſion naturally led to the mention of Lady Julia, whoſe engagement ſhe ſpoke of with the ſame ſincerity, as well as of the obligation ſhe had thought herſelf under, on account of the confidence and kindneſs with which her Ladyſhip had always honoured her, to repreſs any hopes Sir Edgar might have conceived with regard to herſelf.

" Of

"Of perfidy towards a friend for whom I entertained ſo much affection, and who in herſelf was ſo amiable, I may venture to affirm," continued Clarentine, "I ſhould have been utterly incapable, even had my love for Sir Edgar been of a nature leſs ſiſterly than it was. Not for one moment, therefore, did I harbour the deteſtable idea—form the ſlighteſt wiſh of ſupplanting her; neither ſhould I have been weak enough, if I *had*, to imagine ſuch an attempt could ever have been ſanctioned by his mother. Deſtined conſequently, if *I* remained in the ſame houſe, to become an object of continual ſuſpicion—to ſhun Sir Edgar aſſiduouſly—to diſſemble with Lady Julia, and in return perhaps to excite only diſtruſt, I now began to think, however I might lament it at firſt, that the temporary baniſhment to which I have been conſigned, was the happieſt thing that could have befallen me. Sir Edgar alſo, I am now perſuaded, thinks ſo himſelf. He has implicitly ſubmitted to the wiſhes of his family, and ratified every promiſe that had been made for him."

"Ten thouſand thanks, my charming friend," cried Somerſet, when ſhe pauſed, "ten thouſand thanks for this ingenuous recital. The noble ſincerity that ſo early diſtinguiſhed you—that ſo early excited the eſteem and confidence of all who knew you, time, I perceive, has had no power to diminiſh. You are ſtill the ſame open, unreſerved, and generous Clarentine I ever found you!"

"I ſuſpect by the warmth of this eulogium," replied Clarentine, ſmiling, "you impute greater merit to me upon the preſent occaſion than I really deſerve. Had my *heart* been as much a ſufferer in this buſineſs as my *pride*, my frankneſs to you might indeed have claimed ſome admiration; but that not being the caſe, I had nothing more to overcome than a momentary ſenſation of embarraſſment, the natural conſequence of being the heroine; and what is worſe, *the heroine in diſgrace*—of my own tale. Let us now, however," added ſhe, "talk of ſomething elſe. How long have you been in England?"

"A very ſhort time," anſwered Somerſet.

He

He then proceeded to inform her of the dreadful ſhock he had received, on his arrival in Northamptonſhire, whither he haſtened the inſtant he landed, in total ignorance of the melancholy event that had recently taken place. Unprepared as he was for ſuch intelligence—diſpirited and completely overpowered by it, he had for ſome days no courage to think of writing, or even to attempt moving from the gloomy and uninhabited manſion to which, with ſuch far different hopes, he had ſo eagerly repaired.

Becoming impatient, however, to learn ſome tidings of his friends in London, but more particularly of the revered and venerable Mr. Lenham, he had made an effort at length to ſhake off the liſtleſsneſs and depreſſion that had hitherto retained him in inactivity, and determined to ſet out and make thoſe enquiries in perſon. In London he had ſeen only the old domeſtic who ſtill reſided in his father's houſe; and from him obtaining no ſatisfactory information, had proceeded forward almoſt without ſtopping till he reached Hampſtead.

This little narrative was ſcarcely concluded, before Mr. Lenham returned.

Clarentine witneſſed the firſt meeting of that excellent man and his youthful friend, with the moſt ſympathizing emotions of delight and joy. They remained, however, but a ſhort time below, as the preſence of Mrs. and Miſs Barclay, who ſoon after entered the room, ſeemed to repreſs the mutual overflowings of their hearts, and utterly to prevent their engaging in any confidential diſcourſe.

When therefore they had retired to Mr. Lenham's ſtudy, and Clarentine was left with the two ladies, Miſs Barclay, with an eagerneſs it was by no means eaſy to account for, aſked how long Somerſet had been arrived? where he intended to reſide? what ſtay it was probable he would make in England? and ſo many other queſtions of the ſame nature, that Clarentine, unprepared for ſuch an examination, at length attempted to check it, by ſaying—

"I am not yet acquainted with half theſe particulars, my dear Miſs Barclay, and therefore cannot poſſibly reply to them, but tell me, whence this extreme ſolicitude

ſolicitude concerning Captain Somerſet? Did you ever ſee him before?"

"Yes, very often—and yet, it is not for myſelf I aſk all this. I was deſired by—"

She ſtopped, and colouring violently, preſently added—"In ſhort, I have reaſons for wiſhing to know as much as I can about him. If *you* don't chuſe, however, to give me any information, I ſhall endeavour to find out thoſe that will."

"Why, what is all this fuſs and ſecrecy about?" enquired her mother, a little angrily—"I ſhould be glad to know, Lucy, what Capt. Somerſet can be to you!"

"Lord, mama!" exclaimed Miſs Lucy peeviſhly, "how ſhould you underſtand any thing about the matter?—I ſuppoſe I may aſk a common queſtion or two without being called to account for it like a child!"

And ſo ſaying, ſhe indignantly flung out of the room, throwing the door after her with ſuch violence, that ſhe made every window in the houſe rattle in its frame.

"Lord help us, what a girl it is!" cried her mother, as ſoon as ſhe was gone—"there's no ſpeaking a word to her without putting her in a pet! I dare ſay, however, I have gueſſed pretty nearly what it is, Miſs Clary, that makes her ſo curious about your couſin. She's a fool for her pains, and had much better be minding her own affairs, than trying to play other people's cards for them."

Clarentine was totally unable to comprehend this hint, and but little inclined to ſeek its explanation. She therefore ſuffered it to paſs without any comment, and Mrs. Barclay, the next minute, began talking of other things.

At ſupper the two gentlemen made their appearance again, and Miſs Barclay hearing them go down, ſmoothed her frowning brow, and tripped lightly after them. She ſeated herſelf oppoſite Somerſet, and devoted her whole attention to him; frequently fixing her large dark eyes upon his face with an earneſtneſs and perſeverance, that no leſs aſtoniſhed Clarentine, than it evidently offended Mr. Lenham. As for Somerſet himſelf, it was ſome time before he obſerved her: but when he did, regarding

regarding her in return with nearly equal curioſity, he ſuddenly addreſſed her as a perſon he had that moment recollected, and ſaid—

"I think I have had the honour of ſeeing you ſomewhere elſe, Madam. Were you not with Miſs Compton at Mrs. Caſtleton's near Portſmouth, juſt before my laſt embarkation but one?"

Miſs Barclay anſwered in the affirmitive, adding, "Miſs Compton is Mrs. Hertford now. She married ſoon after you ſailed."

"I hope," reſumed Somerſet, "ſhe is well."

"I have not ſeen her very lately,"—replied Miſs Barclay—"But as I underſtand ſhe is now in town for a ſhort time, I hope to have that pleaſure to-morrow."

Somerſet's enquiries, after this, proceeded no further: but Miſs Barclay evidently wiſhing to dwell upon the ſubject, entered into a minute detail of every thing that had befallen her friend ſince her marriage; and concluded by lamenting, in very ſtrong terms, the unfortunate dependence, and pecuniary embarraſſ-

ments to which ſo lovely and accompliſhed a woman found herſelf reduced.

Somerſet appeared to concur in this opinion very ſincerely. He immediately wrote down Mrs. Hertford's direction, and declared his intention of calling upon her the next morning.

This little dialogue, though it ſeemed not to ſtrike any one elſe, ſurprized Clarentine extremely. In Mrs. Hertford ſhe appeared fated to diſcover, accidentally and by degrees, a woman, who though nearly a ſtranger to herſelf, was intimately known to every acquaintance or friend ſhe had, and by each of them individually ſeemed to be held in a different degree of eſtimation. Eltham, ſhe had found, thought of her with contempt, and ſpoke of her with deriſion; Miſs Barclay never mentioned her but with the moſt unbounded praiſe and admiration; Mr. Lenham appeared not to doubt the reſpectability of her character, but, at the ſame time, to know too little of her to regard her with any thing but indifference; Mrs. Barclay had already betrayed that ſhe conſidered her as a coquette; and laſtly, Somerſet, uninfluenced by the partiality

tiality of the one, or the prejudices of the other, openly profeſſed to feel for her the utmoſt compaſſion, and to look upon her with the trueſt eſteem. How were all theſe various opinions to be reconciled? Clarentine was loſt in doubt and perplexity. Leſs inclined, however, to diſtruſt the favourable ſentiments of Somerſet, than to ſuſpect the judgment of Eltham, ſhe once again, more ſtrongly than ever, was confirmed in the belief that he had injured Mrs. Hertford, and cauſeleſsly led her to imbibe an erroneous idea of her.

Well acquainted with the early hours Mr. Lenham was accuſtomed to keep, his conſiderate gueſt took leave ſoon after they roſe from table, promiſing to repeat his viſit ſome time in the courſe of the following day.

Accordingly, the next evening, juſt as Clarentine, who, though ſhe knew not why, had been called down to tea ſooner than uſual, was preparing to obey the ſummons, ſhe ſaw him, from her cloſet window, open the gate before the houſe, and walk up to the door. They met at the foot of the ſtairs, Somerſet on hearing

ing her call to him having waited there till ſhe ran down; and after a ſhort converſation entered the parlour together.—In addition to the uſual family party, they found, ſeated next Mr. Lenham at the tea table, his friend Mrs. Denbigh. Captain Somerſet knew that lady well, and immediately haſtened forward to pay his reſpects to her; whilſt Clarentine, incapable of attending to any thing elſe, ſtood for ſome minutes petrified with amazement, conſidering the altered dreſs and ſtrange decorations of Mrs. and Miſs Barclay, who both, it was evident, were thus attired for foreign conqueſt, and perhaps alſo for domeſtic admiration.

As ſoon as tea was over, and the two ladies did every thing in their power to hurry it as much as poſſible, Miſs Barclay ſtarted up, and caſting her eyes towards the antique clock, which, from the chimney-piece on which it ſtood, had with undeviating regularity monotonouſly chimed each revolving hour for more than thirty years, eagerly called out to her mother—

"Lord, mama, we ſhall be monſtrous late; pray get your cloak and let's be off."

Young

Young Blandford upon this addreſſed himſelf to Mrs. Barclay, and ſaid—

"Shall I be allowed to go with you, ma'am?"

"I don't know, indeed, child; you hav'n't got leave, have you?"

"O yes," ſaid Mr. Lenham ſmiling, "if you chuſe to be troubled with him, he has my full permiſſion."

"Well then, good-by to you all," cried Mrs Barclay. "Good-by. Come along, Lucy, come."

"O, but ſtop, mama," ſaid Miſs Lucy, "ſtop a minute; I forgot it till now: but Mr. Eltham," added ſhe, "overtook me in Pall-Mall, juſt as I was ſtepping up to Mrs. Hertford's door, and gave me a thouſand meſſages to deliver to her; they are half gone out of my head, but I remember, however, they were all exceſſive civil, and (audibly whiſpering, with affected myſterioufneſs) exceſſive *tender!* There, now, I have executed my commiſſion—I'm ready.—Come Blandford."

Then followed by her mother, in as high ſpirits as herſelf, away tripped this exact and punctilious lady.

Somerſet,

Somerſet, extremely amuſed by their eagerneſs, now aſked whither in ſuch haſte they were gone?

Mrs. Denbigh, with a ſhrug and an emphatical groan, anſwered—

"To Breſlaw's, the *Conjuror!*"

Clarentine ſtared; Somerſet laughed; and Mr. Lenham mildly ſaid—

"Nay, my dear madam, why ſhould we deſpiſe theſe good people for ſeeking to divert themſelves their own way? If their minds are incapacitated for higher enjoyments, in God's name, let them go to the *Conjurors.*"

"Why truly," reſumed Mrs. Denbigh, leiſurely tapping the lid of her ſnuff-box, "if by ſome lucky ſlight of hand the cunning man could ſucceed in twirling their brains round to the proper place, I ſhould think their time could not be better ſpent: but with all his ingenuity, I never heard friend Breſlaw poſſeſſed the requiſite abilities for ſuch a taſk."

"Who knows," thought Somerſet, what friend Breſlaw might atchieve if the brains were there to twirl!"

Then addreſſing Clarentine—

"How comes it," ſaid he, ſmiling, "*you* were not of this party?"

"I never

"I never heard it had been planned," anſwered ſhe, "till it would have been too late to have propoſed joining it."

"O, Miſs Delmington, I underſtand," ſaid Mrs. Denbigh, "is deemed utterly unworthy of being made a partaker of theſe refined amuſements! Mrs. Barclay was not even permitted to mention her intention before her."

At that moment a loud ring at the gate-bell was heard; and whilſt Mr. Lenham was endeavouring to conjecture who this unexpected viſitor might be, the maid entered, and, particularly addreſſing the intelligence to Clarentine, announced Mr. Eltham.

Somerſet, inſtantly recollecting the parting ſpeech Miſs Barclay had uttered, turned his eyes towards Clarentine with an arch ſmile, and was beginning to rally her upon this viſit, when obſerving her change colour, and look extremely diſconcerted, he checked himſelf in ſome conſternation, and directed all his attention towards the door, at which Eltham, the next minute, made his appearance.

Bowing firſt to Clarentine, as to the perſon whom his viſit was principally de-

ſigned for, and then in a more general way to the reſt of the party, he drew a chair near her's, and was upon the point of ſeating himſelf, when Mr. Lenham, who had at firſt forgot that ceremony, but now recollected that as they might often meet it would be neceſſary, begged leave to introduce him and Capt. Somerſet to each other.

Eltham, ſtarting at the name, and looking towards Somerſet, who at the ſame moment bowed to him, with the moſt eager curioſity, made a grave inclination to him in return, and taking his place in total ſilence, aſſumed an air of extreme reſerve, and ſpoke not for a conſiderable time, unleſs called upon by ſome direct enquiry.

The firſt quarter of an hour was devoted, as is invariably the caſe among people who know but little of each others' habits and connexions, to animadverting upon the heat or cold of the weather; the fulneſs or emptineſs of the town; the duſtineſs of the roads, and other ſuch enlivening topics! By degrees, however, the converſation took a more agreeable turn: Somerſet, who at firſt had been too much

much offended by the cold haughtineſs of Eltham's manners to bear any part in it, animated by the example of Mr. Lenham and Mrs. Denbigh, made an effort to conquer his ill-humour; and Eltham reviving likewiſe, and every where equally at his eaſe, and equally unembarraſſed, ſoon engaged them all three, either in earneſt ſupport, or oppoſition, of the wild opinions he advanced; and, at leaſt, if he could not *convince*, *entertained*; if he could not *overpower*, *perplexed* them.

Clarentine during this converſation ſat at work, and wholly ſilent; but by no means inattentive. She was amuſed by the fire and excentricity of Eltham; charmed by the candour and patience of Mr. Lenham; ſurprized at the information and knowledge of Mrs. Denbigh; and intereſted by the modeſty, the good ſenſe, and unaſſuming gentleneſs of Somerſet. In him, though ſhe obſerved not the ſame boldneſs in maintaining extravagant ſyſtems, or the ſame readineſs to *aſſert*, and eagerneſs to *defend* prepoſterous chimeras that ſhe diſcovered in Eltham, ſhe perceived a clearneſs of judgment, and a conſiſtency of principle, that

weighed

weighed far more with her than all the falſe glare of his antagoniſt, the brilliancy of his wit, or the ingenuity of his arguments.

This ſpirited, but amicable contention, laſted till the return of Mrs. and Miſs Barclay, and their young companion. Eltham would then have taken his leave, but Mr. Lenham, naturally hoſpitable and polite, preſſed him to ſtay ſupper; and to this, without much importunity, he conſented.

Meanwhile young Blandford, having ſeated himſelf next Clarentine, was giving her, at her own requeſt, a circumſtantial detail of all the wonders to which he had been a witneſs. The ſubject ſoon drew the attention of Mrs. Barclay herſelf, who as much a child to the full as the juvenile narrator, hung over the back of his chair, aſſiſted him in the recital whenever his memory failed, and appeared to enjoy nearly as much delight in *repeating* what ſhe had ſeen, as ſhe could have done had the whole been acted again before her.

Their eagerneſs and volubility at length excited the curioſity of Somerſet and Eltham,

tham, who now became auditors in their turn, affected to liſten with the utmoſt aſtoniſhment to the many ſurpriſing feats of dexterity that were recounted; and ſo enchanted the two relators by their earneſt attention, that had not a timely ſummons to the ſupper-table interrupted the flow of their eloquence, Clarentine muſt have deſpaired of releaſe till the whole party broke up for the night.

The converſation during their meal, though it was more diffuſe and unconnected than it had been in the early part of the evening, was ſupported with good-ſenſe by *ſome*, with good-humour by *all* preſent; and when the hour of ſeparation drew near, every body appeared to think of it with reluctance.

At the moment of taking leave, Eltham perceiving that Clarentine ſtood at ſome diſtance from the reſt of the company, took advantage of the general confuſion, to approach, and addreſs her in a low voice—

"I begin to like your Somerſet," ſaid he, "better than I expected. He is *rational* without being *dull*; and the firſt in whom I ever found united the plain frankneſs

neſs of a ſailor, with the good-breeding and the poliſh of a man of faſhion!"

"I am glad to find you ſo well diſpoſed to do him juſtice," ſaid Clarentine.

"Ah, but remember," reſumed Eltham with quickneſs, "remember upon what *terms* I do him this juſtice; no longer than whilſt he inviolably adheres to his preſent character of *guardian*, and of *friend!*"

"Then long, I believe," ſaid Clarentine, ſmiling, "long indeed may he flatter himſelf he ſhall retain your favour!"

"Are you ſincere?" cried Eltham, ſteadfaſtly regarding her, "are you really ſincere in this opinion? You bluſh!" continued he, after a ſhort ſilence. "Oh Clarentine! you ſpoke not as your wiſhes, or your heart directed!"

Clarentine affecting to laugh, yet cruelly confuſed, turned away without anſwering him, and walked up to Mr. Lenham; whilſt Eltham, rooted for ſome minutes to the ſpot where ſhe had left him, followed her reproachfully with his eyes; and then, hardly conſcious of what he did, put on his hat, and ran abruptly out of the room. Somerſet ſoon after followed him, and Clarentine the next moment retired.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

SOMERSET, unwilling to remove to any diſtance from Hampſtead, had now eſtabliſhed himſelf at his houſe in Clifford ſtreet, for the winter, and ſcarcely ſuffered a day to paſs in the courſe of which he did not, either morning or evening, viſit his young ward. Attentive to the minuteſt circumſtance that could conduce to her domeſtic comfort and convenience, and well knowing that her *own* would be the laſt wants ſhe would allow herſelf to ſupply, he took the utmoſt delight in ornamenting and fitting up for her the favourite cloſet he had heard her ſo partially commemorate. Books, Drawings, an excellent harp, purchaſed in conſequence of having accidentally learnt from Eltham that ſhe uſed to perform upon that inſtrument; in ſhort, whatever fancy could deviſe, or wealth procure to make this little retreat worthy of the lovely poſſeſſor, was profuſely laviſhed upon it; and by Clarentine, ſenſible of the generous pleaſure he took in thus ſeeking

ſeeking to promote her ſatisfaction, gratefully, yet ſometimes half reproachfully, accepted.

If ſhe walked out, he accompanied her; whilſt ſhe ſat working or drawing, he read to her; whatever ſhe expreſſed the ſlighteſt wiſh to learn, he ſought the beſt inſtructors to teach her;—and all this with ſuch unpreſuming delicacy, ſuch a conſtant dread of diſguſting her by too great an appearance of officiouſneſs, that his aſſiduities far from oppreſſing, or laying her under the ſmalleſt reſtraint, ſeemed but to wear the form of an affectionate brother's kindneſs, and never leſſened, or for one moment checked that gay and innocent familiarity with which ſhe had always been accuſtomed to treat him. He was her counſellor, guardian, protector, and friend all in one; ſhe loved him with with the moſt artleſs tenderneſs; adviſed with and confided in him implicitly upon all occaſions; received every freſh mark of his attention with mingled pride and pleaſure, as an additional proof of his approbation and good opinion; delighted in his ſociety, and never felt ſo thoroughly elated as when ſhe could flatter herſelf with

with the hope of having, by her cheerfulneſs, and zealous endeavours to oblige him, contributed, in ſome meaſure, to *his* happineſs from whom ſhe derived ſo large a portion of her *own*.

From a ſtate of felicity thus pure, and thus ſerene, ſhe was firſt diſturbed by the importunate attentions of Eltham, and the yet more, to her, irkſome and depreſſing viſits of Mrs. Hertford. This lady of late renewing more cloſely than ever her former intimacy with Miſs Barclay, and renewing likewiſe all her former inexplicable civility to Clarentine, had eſtabliſhed herſelf, for the remainder of the Autumn, in lodgings within a few doors of Mr. Lenham's, and might almoſt be ſaid to ſpend her whole time at his houſe. She was accompliſhed, animated, and attractive; by the major part of the family, therefore, her ſociety was conſidered as a moſt valuable acquiſition; and by every gueſt who met her there, ſhe was flattered and admired. Yet Clarentine, who, mild and placid as ſhe was, ſupported with patient forbearance the pert familiarity of Miſs Barclay, or the abrupt vulgarity of

her mother; Clarentine, of whom it might ſo juſtly have hitherto been ſaid, that—

" Her ſmiles were ſober, and her looks
" Were cheerful unto all,"*

in defiance of her wonted candour and ſweetneſs, knew not how to indure this univerſal favourite. Vain had been every internal argument ſhe had hitherto held in her behalf; vain all her attempts to baniſh from her memory the firſt diſadvantageous impreſſion ſhe had received of her! The more ſhe ſaw her, the more reſerved and diſtant ſhe found herſelf involuntarily becoming; and to ſo painful a degree did theſe ſenſations of diſlike at length ariſe, that as often as ſhe could, when Mrs. Hertford called, ſhe formed ſome excuſe for quitting the room, and retreating to her own till ſhe was gone.

Somerſet, unſuſpicious of the motive that gave birth to this ſingularity of conduct, gazed after her on theſe occaſions with looks of equal mortification and concern. Often, though without ſucceſs, did he attempt as ſhe approached the door to lead her back, or at leaſt, to exact from her a promiſe that ſhe would ſoon return.

* Reliques of Ancient Poetry.

However

However gentle her refuſals, they were always ſteady and firm; ſhe could give no reaſon for her inflexibility, but if urged too long, her eyes involuntarily filled with tears, ſhe looked diſtreſſed and embarraſſed; and the generous Somerſet, too conſiderate to preſs her further, in ſilent wonder ſuffered her to depart.

From her earlieſt infancy, Clarentine recollected to have heard it ſaid, and by one whom ſhe reſpected and believed, the honoured Lady Delmington, that the moſt certain cure for the dejection of a mind ill at eaſe, was activity and employment. Clarentine's mind, and ſhe too well ſuſpected the cauſe, *was* ill at eaſe, more ſo than ſhe ever remembered to have known it before. To employment, therefore, the moſt diligent and inceſſant, ſhe had eager recourſe; and though her own wiſhes would have prompted her to indulge in liſtleſſneſs, and even indolence, to her own wiſhes ſhe permitted not herſelf to attend; but ſpurred on by the hope of driving from her mind the ſadneſs that oppreſſed it, every hour was devoted to the purſuit of ſome uſeful occupation, or

to the accompliſhment of ſome benevolent deſign. In company with Mrs. Denbigh, who upon a longer acquaintance ſhe found as much reaſon to eſteem as to admire, ſhe viſited and relieved many of the ſick poor in the neighbourhood; recommended their children to the notice and protection of Mr. Lenham; found work for ſome of the young women who were willing to be employed; and diſpenſed with ſo liberal a hand around her every bleſſing which kindneſs, ſympathy, and timely, though not profuſe donations, can confer, that however anxious and diſquieted ſhe might at intervals ſtill feel, all real ſorrow was nearly forgotten, and in contemplating the few, but grateful happy ſhe had made, ſhe was ſometimes more than half inclined to include *herſelf* in the number.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

HITHERTO Clarentine, though ſhe had now been at Mr. Lenham's near four months, had rarely been in London, and, except to Mrs. Denbigh, had never paid any viſits whatever. She knew not a ſingle individual in town; and Somerſet had always ſo earneſtly cautioned her not to accompany the Barclays to any of the inferior public-places to which they were perpetually reſorting, that ſhe had reſolutely declined ever being of their parties.

One morning, however, towards the latter end of November, hearing that the two ladies were going to town upon what they called *ſhopping buſineſs*, and meant poſitively to return to dinner; wiſhing to ſeize that opportunity of making ſome purchaſes for herſelf, ſhe propoſed, if it was not inconvenient, going with them.

Somerſet, who was preſent when this plan was agreed upon, very ſtrenuouſly ſought to obtain permiſſion to attend her;

but this, Clarentine as ſtrenuouſly oppoſed. Her prepoſſeſſion againſt Mrs. Hertford had for ſome time paſt began to give way to a ſlight degree of reſentment againſt Somerſet himſelf. She feared to whiſper it even to her own heart, and yet ſhe could not but feel, that the attention he paid that lady; the pleaſure he appeared to take in her converſation; and the flattering admiration he avowed for her, had excited in her breaſt at ſome moments an emotion ſo nearly bordering upon envy, and ſo cloſely allied to jealouſy and anger, that there could be but one paſſion, to which ſuch ſenſations were to be attributed—and that paſſion was love! Long had ſhe moſt clearly diſcerned what were the deſigns of Mrs. Hertford herſelf; and long had ſhe beheld with aſtoniſhment her artful and perſevering endeavours to captivate and attach him. Floating between hope and fear; conſcious that her own heart was gone, and doubtful what would be the reſult of her rival's ſchemes, it had, however, been but of late that ſhe had ſeriouſly apprehended they would be ſucceſsful; every hour now confirmed her in

in this opinion—encreaſed the evident triumph of Mrs. Hertford, who ſeemed perfectly to have penetrated her ſecret ſentiments, and aſcertained the defeat of Somerſet.

Had the woman, however, whom he had thus ſelected, afflicting to Clarentine as it muſt ever have been to know he had ſelected any, poſſeſſed a character more conformable to his own, and appeared to her more deſerving and more worthy, ſhe flattered herſelf, and not unjuſtly, that ſhe could have ſubmitted to her diſappointment with greater fortitude. The firſt wiſh of her heart was to ſee him happy: but happy ſhe was too well perſuaded a man like him—whoſe diſpoſition was all kindneſs and affection, and whoſe attachments were all domeſtic—could never be with a woman who, like Mrs. Hertford, betrayed unconſciouſly a nature ſo devoid of ſenſibility, a heart ſo ſelfiſh, and a mind ſo devoted to diſſipation.

Sometimes, when ſilently obſerving them as they walked or converſed together, Clarentine had fancied this idea ſeemed to ſtrike Somerſet likewiſe. Her

blandiſhments and her flattery appeared to fatigue him; the coldeſt gravity often overſpread his countenance; and glad of any relief, yet ſcarce knowing what he did, he had eagerly ſeized on the moſt frivolous pretences to eſcape from her, and with ſtudied procraſtination delayed rejoining her again.

On theſe occaſions, had ſhe permitted it, Clarentine perceived he would gladly have taken refuge with her. She avoided him, however, moſt aſſiduouſly; or if it any time accident threw her in his way when there was no third perſon preſent, behaved to him with a reſerve and formality, ſo unlike her former confidential gaiety, that although he formed not the moſt diſtant conjecture of its cauſe, he found himſelf involuntarily repulſed by her coldneſs, and obliged to deſiſt from all further importunity.

Upon the preſent occurrence, this newly-aſſumed ſolemnity had ſhewn itſelf with more than uſual force, and Clarentine's rejection of him, uttered before Mrs. Hertford, had been accompanied by a look of impatience, and a ſmile of diſdain, that confounded no leſs than it

amazed

amazed him. He gazed at her for ſome minutes, as if he doubted the evidence of his own ſenſes, and then after a long pauſe, attempting to take her hand, ſaid—

"Miſs Delmington, I entreat, I conjure you, though you have denied my firſt requeſt, at leaſt grant me five minutes converſation before you go!"

"I cannot, indeed," replied ſhe—"Mrs. Barclay, I believe, is ready, and it is time we ſhould ſet out."

Then turning to Mrs. Hertford, in whoſe eyes ſhe beheld a gleam of malicious joy, that made her ſhudder, ſhe ſlightly curteſied to her, and leaving them together, haſtened away.

The moment ſhe found herſelf at liberty, her full heart burſting with contending paſſions, ſhe gave way to an agony of tears, and ruſhed into the firſt room that was open, to conceal her ſorrow and her weakneſs. Her face covered, and her aching head reſting againſt a chair, ſhe was vainly endeavouring to ſtifle the deep, and but too-audible ſobs that eſcaped her, when, in a voice of the tendereſt compaſſion, ſhe heard herſelf

ſuddenly addreſſed by the amazed and benevolent Mr. Lenham—

"My gentle Clarentine," cried he, taking her hand—"whence this exceſs of grief? Who has been with you? Who is it that has thus cruelly diſturbed you?"

Clarentine, looking up, and deeply bluſhing, replied with a melancholy ſmile—"The enemy who has done all this, my deareſt Sir, is myſelf, it is my own folly I lament, and not either the unkindneſs, or the cruelty of others." Then riſing and gently withdrawing her hand—"Excuſe my giving you any further explanation"—added ſhe—"and forget, dear Mr. Lenham, if you can, that you ever ſaw me thus unguardedly expoſe myſelf."

So ſaying, without daring to wait till he ſpoke to her again, ſhe left him, and ran up to her own room.

In a ſhort time, the voice of Mrs. Barclay, calling to her from the landing-place, once more compelled her to appear. She haſtily put on her cloak, and after bathing her eyes, and ſtanding ſome minutes at the open window, hoping the air would diſperſe their redneſs, ſhe armed herſelf with

with courage to meet Somerſet in caſe he came out to ſee them depart, and walked quietly down ſtairs.

No Somerſet, however, appeared. Mrs. Barclay was waiting for her alone at the door, and told her Lucy had changed her mind, and would not go—"So as we have nobody to ſtay for," added ſhe, "let's be off."

Accordingly they began their walk immediately; Clarentine reviving as they proceeded, and in the conſciouſneſs that her ſecret, tho' unhappily betrayed to Mrs. Hertford, was ſtill utterly unknown to Somerſet, and ſhe hoped alſo, utterly unſuſpected by Mr. Lenham, acquiring fortitude patiently to bear whatever other mortification might await her.

At the firſt ſhop Mrs. Barclay ſtopped at, a few minutes after ſhe had entered it, Clarentine heard her very familiarly accoſted by a bold, ſhewy-looking woman who followed them into it, and who, when the firſt cordial ſalutations were over, informed her with high glee, that ſhe was juſt ſetting off to dine in the city at a friend's houſe where, in the evening, there was to be a *grand chriſtening*, and where

ſhe expected to meet *all the world and his wife!*

"Now," added ſhe, "if you were good for any thing, Dame Barclay, you'd go along with me. You are quite ſmart enough, and they know you very well."

Mrs. Barclay, always ready for any thing that could be called *a frolic*, ſeemed ſo willing to embrace this propoſal, could ſhe but deviſe ſome means of acquainting Mr. Lenham where ſhe was gone, that Clarentine very ſoon perceiving what would be her deciſion, and dreading to be included in this party, now ſtepped forward, and ſaid—

"I can deliver to him, madam, any meſſage you pleaſe, if this gentleman," turning to the maſter of the ſhop, "will have the goodneſs to permit one of his people to call me a coach."

"Lord, my dear," cried Mrs. Barclay, "what ſhould *you* go home for if I don't? They'll know I'm old enough to keep out of miſchief, and I dare ſay will never be ſuch fools as to trouble their heads about me. As we can't conveniently therefore get any body to carry them word, let's go

without, and try to get back the ſooner for't in the evening."

To this, as far as related to herſelf, Clarentine moſt warmly objected: but Mrs. Barclay, half affronted at her reſiſtance, and totally regardleſs of her arguments, urged her ſo vehemently to comply, and ſo nearly betrayed a diſpoſition to quarrel with her if ſhe did not, that timid and fearful, a reluctant aſſent was finally drawn from her, and a coach immediately ſent for to convey them all three to Goodman's Fields.

After a tedious ride through ſome of the cloſeſt ſtreets in London—ſtreets which to Clarentine, who had all her life been uſed to breathe the pure air of the country, appeared ſcarcely fit for human habitation, they at length arrived at their place of deſtination. What, however, was poor Mrs. Barclay's diſappointment, when, on being ſhewn up into the dining-room, the firſt intelligence ſhe heard from the miſtreſs of the houſe, who ſeemed, in conſequence, totally unprepared to receive company was, that her child had been taken ill, and the chriſtening was put off!

"Lord,"

"Lord," cried Mrs. Watkins, the lady who had led the mortified Mrs. Barclay thither, "why did'n't you ſend me word ſo?"

"I did; a note went to your houſe by ten o'clock this morning."

"Ten o'clock! Lord help you, I was dreſſed and out before that time."

"I am extremely ſorry it happened ſo," reſumed the lady, "but upon my word I could not ſend ſooner."

"Well," cried Mrs. Watkins, recovering from her firſt conſternation, "if the worſt comes to the worſt, you, and this young lady, Dame Barclay, muſt go home and dine with *me*."

"You are very good," ſaid Clarentine, "but we may yet get back to Hampſtead in perfect time, and that will be infinitely better on all accounts."

"Lord bleſs me, Miſs Clary," exclaimed Mrs. Barclay, affecting to laugh, yet evidently much diſpleaſed at her preſuming to anſwer for her, "you need not be ſo impatient, for though Mr. Eltham *did* ſay he'd call to-day, I'll lay my life he'll not ſet out till evening, and there-

fore

ſore you may ſafely dine in town without fearing to miſs him."

"O, there's a ſweet-heart in the caſe, is there?" cried Mrs. Watkins, facetiouſly, "I don't ſo much wonder then at the young lady's unwillingneſs."

Extremely provoked at theſe ſpeeches, Clarentine now determined to give up all interference, and quietly to let Mrs. Barclay purſue her own courſe. She accordingly followed the two ladies back into the coach, which fortunately had not yet been diſmiſſed, and in paſſive ſilence heard them give orders to be driven to Long Acre.

On there arrival there, Mrs. Watkins uſhering them into a dark and comfortleſs back-parlour, in which were two or three noiſy, quarrelling children, left them, to give orders concerning dinner, and to ſee the cloth laid in the front room.

"Well," cried Mrs. Barclay, as ſoon as ſhe was gone, "I've been led into a mighty ſcrape indeed! It does'n't ſignify, but to be ſure ſhe richly deſerves all the trouble ſhe'll have. I dare ſay her cupboard is empty enough! Ten to one if we

we get a ſcrap of any thing theſe two hours."

Clarentine thinking it vain to remonſtrate againſt the indelicacy of accepting an invitation, which muſt neceſſarily be attended with ſo much inconvenience to the perſon by whom it was made, was ſilent for ſome minutes, and then began talking with one of the children, whom finding more intelligent than the reſt, ſhe amuſed herſelf with during the remainder of the time they waited; whilſt Mrs. Barclay, who perhaps had ſcarcely looked into a book before ſince ſhe quitted ſchool, took up an old [illegible]azine, and ſat yawning over it till [illegible] was announced.

The inſtant they roſe from table, Mrs. Barclay, by this time as [illegible] ſickened of her *frolic* as Clarenti[illegible] been before, looked at her w[illegible] declared it was ſo late they muſt [illegible] the beſt of their way home directly.

"No, no, Dame H[illegible] Mrs. Watkins, laughing, [illegible] neither! Do you k[illegible] amends for your balk[illegible]nt

I ſent off a boy to Hampſtead, before we ſat down to dinner, to acquaint Mr. Lenham that I ſhould keep you here this evening to go to the play with me? Ay, and what's more," added ſhe, "you may ſtay and take a bed here if you like."

Joy lighted up every feature in Mrs. Barclay's face at this moſt welcome intelligence. As eager now to ſet off for the theatre as ſhe had the moment before been to return home, ſhe allowed Mrs. Watkins no time to order tea: but like an impatient child, proteſting ſhe could not "ſettle to any thing," and had rather "ſtand at the play-houſe door till it was opened, than ſit [illegible] was fidgetting and thinking [illegible] hour before-hand," ſhe perſuaded that lady, though it was ſcarcely more than five o'clock, to ſet [illegible] diately, and drew the wearied [illegible] ing Clarentine, who was allowed [illegible] on, away with her.

In any [illegible] rty, or in any other [illegible] wer, the proſpect of [illegible] ne, not only a *Lon-* [illegible] tre of *any* kind— [illegible] ad never been to [illegible] ould have afforded her

her the livelieſt pleaſure. Nay, as it was, the cheerful animal ſpirits ſo natural to her age and genuine character, were inſenſibly revived at the idea; and though leſs reſtleſs, and leſs perturbid than her *buxom* companion, ſhe was ſcarcely leſs pleaſed, and ſcarcely leſs deſirous of reaching the ſcene of ſo much expected felicity.

They had not proceeded far, though Mrs. Barclay walked with a ſwiftneſs that was almoſt too much even for the light and active Clarentine, when, driving towards them with great rapidity, ſhe perceived Mr. Eltham's carriage, and Eltham himſelf within it. She ſhrunk behind her two conductors at this ſight, hoping to eſcape his notice; but Eltham's eyes, quick and diſcerning, had caught a tranſient view of her, and before ſhe had time to congratulate herſelf upon her fancied eſcape, the carriage ſuddenly ſtopped, and he was at her elbow—

"My fair Clarentine!" cried he, with his accuſtomed impetuoſity, "by what fortunate chance have I the happineſs of meeting you? Where at ſuch an hour can you be going? and how is it," looking earneſtly

earneſtly at her, "I behold you here without *your Guardian?*"

Clarentine replying only to his firſt enquiries, anſwered—

"I came to town this morning upon ſome buſineſs, and am now going to the play."

"To the play?" repeated Eltham, "I am very glad I know it, for I meant to have gone this evening to Hampſtead.—Are you not very early, however?"

"O, that's no matter;" ſaid Mrs. Barclay, "we ſhall get the better places for't."

"And where, madam," reſumed Eltham, "may I be allowed to aſk, do you mean to ſit?"

"In the pit." anſwered ſhe—

Eltham upon this looked at Clarentine with an air that ſeemed to imply, "and, do *you* ſit there too?" But Clarentine unconſcious of his meaning, and perfectly ignorant which was the beſt, or which the worſt place in the houſe, remained ſilent, and walked tranquilly on.

In a few minutes, Eltham, who ſeemed to have been debating within himſelf how he ſhould act, and whoſe carriage during this

this time had ſlowly followed him, beckoned to his ſervant, and bidding him go home, ordered him to tell the coachman likewiſe, he ſhould not want him again.

Then flying after Clarentine, who, regardleſs of his ſtopping, had herſelf proceeded forward, and nearly reached the end of the ſtreet.—"I intend myſelf the pleaſure of going to the play with you," cried he.

"Lord, Mr. Eltham," exclaimed Mrs. Barclay, "what ſhould you go for? I dare ſay you have not dined yet."

"My dear madam," cried Eltham, laughing, "do you think I am a man of ſo little taſte as not infinitely to prefer *your* company to the groſs pleaſures of the table?"

"I think, at leaſt," replied Mrs. Barclay drily, "there *is* a certain perſon in the world whom you infinitely prefer to *every thing*, though I a'n't ſuch a fool as not to know that is'n't *me!*"

"You do me great injuſtice," reſumed he ironically, "for were I, indeed, ſuſceptible of an excluſive attachment, upon whom could I better fix my choice?"

This

This ſpeech was rather too ambiguous for Mrs. Barclay's powers of comprehenſion; ſhe felt not its abſurdity, nor was pained by its ridicule; and therefore walked on without taking of it the ſlighteſt notice.

They were now arrived at the playhouſe door, which though it yet, as had been foreſeen, remained unopened, was already crowded with eager expectants, impatient to gain admiſſion. Eltham caſt an anxious look towards Clarentine as they advanced, and ſaw her turn pale at the ſcene of confuſion in which ſhe was about to be involved. She mechanically caught hold of his arm (which he had before vainly offered) and ſtarting at every loud ſhout ſhe heard, drawing fearfully back upon the arrival of every freſh party, and dreading to be entirely ſurrounded, very ſoon completely loſt ſight not only of the dauntleſs Mrs. Barclay, but of her friend.

Eltham, whom her terror concerned, though her reluctance to proceed delighted, moved as ſhe moved, and retreated as ſhe retreated. His manly figure, his height, and commanding aſpect ſecured her from the danger of being

ſpoken

ſpoken to, for no one, ſeeing her ſo protected, had the courage to attempt it; but as ſhe had now withdrawn from that part of the crowd where the anxiety and the throng was the greateſt, ſhe became an object of much attention to many of the idle lookers-on, who without intending to go in, ſtood unconcerned ſpectators of the buſtle, and whom on all ſides Eltham heard remarking—"She's a deviliſh pretty girl!" "How well ſhe puts on that look of timidity!" "Ay, to be ſure, ſhe's no favourite with her companion!"—and many other ſimilar obſervations, which provoked him ſo much, that, earneſtly addreſſing her, he at length exclaimed—

"For heaven's ſake, my deareſt creature, determine upon ſomething, and either try once more to go forward, or ſuffer me to ſee you home; for here you are liable to nothing but inſult and impertinence!"

Startled by this remonſtrance, and now for the firſt time, perceiving the offenſive curioſity ſhe had excited, ſhe endeavoured to gain more courage, and agreed to move on. The doors opened at the ſame moment, and a general ruſh immediately

diately enſuing, ſhe was inſtantly encloſed on every ſide, impelled irreſiſtibly forward, and preſſed, ſtaggered, and overpowered to ſo great a degree, that after vainly contending for ſome time, in agonies unſpeakable with the fearful apprehenſions that ſeized her, ſhe loſt all command over herſelf, and uttering a piercing ſhriek, fell back without ſenſe or motion in Eltham's arms.

To deſcribe the conſternation and diſtreſs with which he was filled at that moment would be impoſſible. Encompaſſed by a ſet of people, who, callous and unmoved, ſtared with vacant ſurpriſe, at his ſpeechleſs burthen, and then proceeded forward in thoughtleſs indifference to her fate, it ſeemed to require almoſt ſupernatural ſtrength to repel the torrent that oppreſſed him, or to force himſelf a paſſage through it. Rage, however, and indignation lent him vigour, and in defiance of every obſtacle, ſternly commanding thoſe about him to make way, terrifying ſome by threats, and ſubduing others by entreaty, he at length accompliſhed his purpoſe, and bore her ſafely,

though ſtill inanimate, to the firſt ſhop he found open.

The compaſſionate aſſiſtance that was there afforded her, in a very ſhort time brought her back to life and recollection. She ſmiled gratefully upon Eltham for his care and attention, and thanking the woman of the ſhop, who with much civility preſſed her to ſtay till ſhe was more recovered, declared perfectly able to go, and begged to have a coach ſent for, that ſhe might return home immediately.

"I think, indeed," ſaid Eltham, "that will be your beſt plan; but you ſtill ſeem too much hurried and diſcompoſed to remove ſo ſoon. Sit here a few minutes longer, and let me before you enter the coach ſee ſome degree of colour return to your cheeks, and ſome of their uſual vivacity re-animate your eyes. You are now by much too wan and ghoſtly a figure to be truſted beyond the reach of aſſiſtance."

Clarentine wiſhing to ſend either a note or meſſage to Mrs. Watkins, to aſſure Mrs. Barclay, on her return from the play, of her ſafety, agreed to a few minutes delay on that account, and writing upon

upon the back of a letter, as legibly as her yet unſteady hand would allow her, a few lines to that effect, ſhe committed them to the care of the miſtreſs of the ſhop, who promiſed they ſhould be ſafely delivered.

A boy belonging to the houſe was then diſpatched for a coach, and Clarentine hearing it approach, aroſe to go.

Eltham, taking her hand to lead her out, ſaid, "I make no apology, Miſs Delmington, for preſuming to accompany you; ill as you have been, it is abſolutely neceſſary you ſhould not go alone. Nay," continued he, obſerving that with a look of extreme ſerioufneſs, ſhe was about to ſpeak, "do not attempt to oppoſe it, for upon this occaſion you will find *me* as abſolute as *yourſelf*."

He then made a paſſing bow to the miſtreſs of the ſhop, and handing Clarentine into the coach, jumped in after her, and directed the coachman whither to drive.

Clarentine obſerving a profound ſilence for ſome minutes after they were ſeated, Eltham, a little piqued, at length ſaid—

"My deareſt Miſs Delmington, I perceive with concern, that upon the preſent, as upon every other occurrence, I have had the misfortune to diſpleaſe you. Why, however, ſhould it be ſo? Why cannot you conſider me in a more friendly view? Have I ſo totally ſunk myſelf in your good opinion, ſo utterly forfeited all title to your confidence, that, at a moment like this—requiring protection, yet alone, and unattended—you fear to truſt yourſelf with me?"

Clarentine aſhamed and diſtreſſed, ſcarcely knew what anſwer to make to a ſpeech ſo ſerious, and ſo reproachful; ſhe ſtammered out, however, a few words of ſcarcely-intelligible acknowledgment; and then, ſeeking to change the ſubject, ſaid—

"How long will it be, Sir, before you go down to Welwyn park? I underſtood you meant to ſpend there the greateſt part of the ſhooting ſeaſon?"

"I did;" replied Eltham—"but motives, which, if I dared, I would frankly acknowledge to you, have detained me in town. Are you *very* impatient, however, for my departure?"

"Would

"Would an anſwer in the affirmative," aſked Clarentine ſmiling, "be remarkably civil?"

"Perhaps not: but from *you* I diſpenſe with *civility*, in favour of *candour*. Speak to me then, as you think, and honeſtly ſay, do you wiſh me to go?"

"I really wiſh you to do nothing but what moſt ſuits your own convenience. You cannot ſuppoſe, Mr. Eltham, I have any deſire to take upon myſelf the direction of your conduct!"—

"A more *jeſuitical* perſonage than you are," cried Eltham, "I ſcarcely ever met with? you ſeem to have made the art of prevarication your peculiar ſtudy, and have obtained a degree of proficiency in it, that does honour to your application!"

He then attempted to turn the converſation upon the ſubject of Somerſet: but that was a point on which Clarentine was impenetrable indeed! and on which her anſwers were ſo laconic and ſo guarded, that Eltham, renewing his reproaches, and proceeding ſo far as even openly to accuſe her of diſſimulation, awakened in her a ſpecies of indignation which drew from her a retort ſo ſpirited,

and ſo ſevere, that, ſilenced and offended in his turn, one of thoſe mutual and almoſt ſullen pauſes enſued, the conſequence, ſo frequently, of his vehemence and impetuoſity.

He was the firſt, however, at length to ſpeak—

"Upon my honour," ſaid he, in a tone which, though it proved him ſtill a little angry, was more good-humoured than Clarentine expected, "I ſincerely believe we were deſtined to be, time immemorial, had no malign influence ſtepped in between us, a pair of *true* and *veritable* lovers! We quarrel with, we provoke and affront each other with all the perſevering ingenuity imaginable! Every perverſe practice that lovers are ſaid to delight in, we likewiſe perpetually run into. All that is wanting to complete the reſemblance, are the enchanting tranſitions from anger to forgiveneſs—the delicious *reconciliations* that uſually follow theſe ſhort-lived tempeſts!"

"I ſhould think very ill," ſaid Clarentine, "of a lover, who made it his ſtudy wantonly to *offend*, merely to have the pleaſure of *appeaſing* me."

"Do

"Do you then prefer the lifeleſs inſipidity of an attachment compoſed only of ſmiles, and monotonous ſerenity, to the animated and ever-varying tranſports of a paſſion, which ſometimes breaks out into petulance and caprice, then melts again into tenderneſs and complacency?"

Clarentine with a ſmile replied—

"Calmneſs and ſerenity, however *monotonous* or *inſipid*, I ſhould always prefer to ſuch tranſient, and unreaſonable tranſports."

"Ah, Clarentine!" exclaimed he, almoſt involuntarily ſeizing her hand, "I cannot, I do not believe you! The brilliancy, the ſparkling intelligence of your eyes, the glow of ſenſibility diffuſed over your whole countenance, convinces me it is impoſſible a love ſo cold, ſo languid, ſhould conſtitute the ſole emotion of your heart! you were born to *inſpire* and to *participate* in ſentiments far more animated and fervent!"

Clarentine, extremely diſguſted at the incorrigible freedom that led him perpetually to addreſs her in a ſtrain ſo flighty and improper—particularly, as that freedom never ſo offenſively diſplayed itſelf

as when they were alone, and therefore ſeemed to wear the aſpect of deſign and premeditation—now ſaid very gravely—

"Mr Eltham, I am unwilling to entertain ſo very ill an opinion of you, as to ſuppoſe the continual uneaſineſs you occaſion me by ſuch extraordinary language can be *intentional:* but as I perceive that to talk to me at all, and to talk to me in a manner that gives me pain, is with you invariably the ſame thing, be aſſured this is the *laſt time* that any circumſtance whatever, ſhort of abſolute compulſion, ſhall again induce me to accept your attendance, or commit myſelf to your care!"

This timely, and ſerious rebuke, immediately convinced Eltham he had preſumed too far upon the well-known placability of her diſpoſition, and could not be too quick in ſeeking to make his peace. He immediately therefore—and with unwonted humility—endeavoured to obtain her pardon; proteſted he would make it the ſtudy of his whole life never in the ſame manner to offend her again; and, for the reſt of the way, miraculouſly kept his promiſe!

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

ON their arrival at Hampſtead, Mr. Lenham hearing her voice in the entrance, and ſurprized, after the meſſage he had received, at her early return, haſtened out to meet and welcome her. Clarentine ruſhed forward the inſtant he appeared, and delighted once again to be reſtored to his protection, was beginning an account of her adventures, when perceiving immediately behind him, regarding her with an air of grave and frigid ſolemnity, Captain Somerſet! her voice faltered, ſhe turned pale, and ſcarcely able to refrain from tears, walked dejectedly into the parlour without venturing to ſpeak, or look up again.

They all followed her; and Mr. Lenham taking her hand, and addreſſing her with the kindeſt ſolicitude, ſaid—

"I fear, my dear young friend, the troubles and the fatigues of the day have been too much for you. You look

harraſſed and diſpirited; tell me, where did Mrs. Barclay lead you? Where is ſhe now, and how came you back without her?"

Clarentine, in anſwer to theſe friendly interrogatories, now made an effort to ſpeak, and as briefly as ſhe could recounted all that had befallen her. Then caſting a timid glance towards Somerſet, who, yet ſilent and thoughtful, ſat leaning againſt the table in an attitude of profound attention, ſhe forced a ſmile, and ſaid—

"Though *you*, my dear Mr. Lenham kindly ſuſpended your judgment, till you heard my defence—*others*, I fear, have been leſs candid!"

Somerſet, looking hurt and ſurpriſed, roſe from his ſeat, and begun walking about the room in evident agitation; whilſt Mr. Lenham ſaid—

"You deceive yourſelf, my dear young lady; we were all perſuaded that your delay was as involuntary as it was alarming; and when Mrs. Watkins's meſſenger came, and Captain Somerſet, who is but this moment returned from town where he dined, learnt it was deſigned to carry you to the play, his uneaſineſs on your account

count was ſo great, that, juſt as you arrived, he was upon the point of ſetting off for London again, to endeavour to aſſiſt you in getting out, and to ſee you ſafe home."

"My interference, however," ſaid Somerſet, ſuſpending his walk whilſt he ſpoke, and then ſlowly proceeding, "would have been ſuperfluous; I knew not, at the moment I planned it, how well Miſs Delmington was attended already."

"Mr. Eltham," cried Clarentine, cruelly diſconcerted by the coldneſs and ſerioufneſs with which this was uttered, "met me by mere accident; and I am certain, till the inſtant I was taken ill, had no intentions of returning with me."

"At all events," reſumed Somerſet, "my ſervices would have been of little worth, and perhaps I have reaſon to congratulate myſelf that their untimely offer met not with a *ſecond* rejection."

Eltham, who during this little dialogue had, by turns, ſurveyed the two ſpeakers with looks of aſtoniſhment and curioſity, now gaily ſaid—

"The novelty of this ſcene is really enchanting! On one ſide we behold a grave and venerable man," bowing to Mr. Lenham, "who in his capacity of Guardian, though anxious for the welfare of his ward, is mild and gentle; willing to credit her vindication, and deſirous of reſtoring her to confidence. On the other," looking towards Somerſet, "lo! where there ſtands a young, but (pardon the expreſſion) incredulous and rigid cenſor, who in *his* capacity of Guardian, though tenacious of his privileges, does nothing to ſecure them; and who aſſuming the auſterity that belongs in general only to age, leaves, at once, the gallantry and the indulgence of youth, to his ſenior in office."

Somerſet, who towards the end of this ſpeech, had ſtopped ſhort and ſternly liſtened to its concluſion with his eyes ſteadily fixed upon Eltham, was now beginning ſome very ſarcaſtic reply to it, when Mr. Lenham interpoſing, ſaid—

"Captain Somerſet, it cannot really be your intention ſeriouſly to reſent this ſpeech? a ſpeech uttered in raillery, and meant

meant but as a good-humoured reproof of your gravity."

Somerſet checked himſelf; and though his countenance reſumed not immediately all its wonted calmneſs, forbore ſaying any thing farther.

Meanwhile, the grieved and humbled Clarentine, one moment petrified at Somerſet's chilling indifference, the next frightened at his apprehended aſperity, ſat motionleſs and ſilent, with her eyes fixed upon the floor, and her whole heart ſo ſaddened and ſo depreſſed, that it was with the utmoſt difficulty ſhe kept her place, or knew how to diſperſe the tears that were every inſtant ready to ſtart.

The ſight of this dejection, the paleneſs of her countenance, and the remembrance of the diſtreſſing ſcene he had witneſſed in the morning, excited Mr. Lenham's utmoſt inquietude and concern. He moved towards her, and whilſt Eltham was ſpeaking to Miſs Barclay, who at that moment entered, and Somerſet with affected unconcern was looking over the news-paper, entreated her, in the moſt anxious and preſſing terms, to tell him

what it was that cauſed in her ſo melancholy a change?

Clarentine, overpowered by this gentleneſs and ſympathy, and no longer able to command the tears ſhe had ſo long ſtruggled to reſtrain, now ſaid in a low and faultering voice—

"Oh, do not, deareſt Sir, do not ſpeak to me with this oppreſſing kindneſs, I conjure you! Could I, dared I confide in any one, it ſhould be in you: but mine is a ſecret that *ought not* to be told!"

"You amaze me!" cried he, "what ſecret can be depoſited in a heart ſo guileleſs and ſo pure as yours, that you need bluſh to reveal?"

"Alas, Sir!" exclaimed Clarentine, ſighing, "how little you ſuſpect the ſtate of that heart you ſeek thus benevolently to penetrate. It is filled at this moment with every evil paſſion. Pride, reſentment, envy, and ingratitude aſſail it by turns; and, oh Sir, aſſail it ſo forcibly, that I know not how to repel them!"

Mr. Lenham inexpreſſibly aſtoniſhed at this ſpeech, looked at her a few minutes in ſilent conſternation; then fearing they might be obſerved, ſaid—

"This

"This is no place in which to ſolicit you for an explanation; but to-morrow I hope you will not refuſe to gratify a curioſity you have ſo painfully raiſed!"

Clarentine's heart was too full to ſpeak, and Mr. Lenham, kindly preſſing her hand as he aroſe, walked away.

A few minutes after, Eltham took his ſeat, and earneſtly examining her, at length abruptly ſaid—

"Has Mr. Lenham been playing the ſame part your *other* guardian did? You have been weeping, Miſs Delmington; you ſeem diſtreſſed—Wherefore? What has occaſioned it?"

Too much diſturbed to attend to him, Clarentine turned from his enquiring eye with embarraſſment and uneaſineſs, and aſſuring him he had miſtaken fatigue for ſorrow, beſought him to leave her—

"I will;" cried he, riſing immediately, "it would be barbarous at ſuch a time to importune you longer."

He then rejoined the party round the table; and Clarentine perceiving ſhe might quit the room without being obſerved, very ſoon after went up ſtairs.

The

The tacit conſent ſhe had given to Mr. Lenham's requeſt of an explanation the next day, there recurred to her with the moſt painful ſenſations of ſelf reproach. Should ſhe, acknowledging her weakneſs to Somerſet's moſt approved and eſtabliſhed friend, voluntarily put herſelf in danger of having it betrayed to Somerſet himſelf? The idea was inſupportable!

"Who I," cried ſhe, "I be the publiſher of my own diſgrace? I impower any one to report to him a confeſſion ſo humiliating; diſcloſe not only my love, but my diſappointment, my vain wiſhes, my jealouſy and regret? No, never! Somerſet's indifference I may learn to bear: but to become the object either of his pity, or his contempt, would be too much!"

The reſult of theſe angry ſelf-interrogatories was, a fixed determination aſſiduouſly to ſhun the half-promiſed, but mortifying conference to which ſhe expected to be called; or, if unavoidably drawn into it, frankly to declare ſhe already repented having even gone ſo far, and moſt earneſtly wiſhed Mr. Lenham would releaſe her from an engagement ſhe found it ſo difficult to fulfil.

"Perhaps,"

"Perhaps," cried ſhe, "he may, at firſt, be tempted to accuſe me of caprice and inconſiſtency; he may juſtly wonder, that whilſt, at one moment, I ſpeak with ſuch unguarded openneſs as even to lead to a ſuppoſition I *wiſh* to be penetrated, the next, I ſhould thus ſtrangely recant. Far better, however, is it, he ſhould conjecture the worſt from my ſilence, than for a ſingle inſtant imagine my confidence is intended as a call upon his compaſſion, and granted merely with a view of exciting him to plead for me with Somerſet! *Plead* for me," added ſhe, indignantly, "Good God, in ſuch circumſtances as mine—in *any* circumſtances—*plead* for the favour of a man decidedly attached to another! Oh Somerſet! low as I am ſunk, hopeleſs, grieved, and diſpirited as I feel, not even to obtain *your* commiſeration would I ſubject myſelf to the ſuſpicion of a meanneſs ſo abject!"

The pride which thus ſeaſonably came to her ſupport, aided by reaſon and cooler reflection, now led her alſo to aſk herſelf, why ſhe indulged againſt him a degree of reſentment, which, free as he was to chuſe for himſelf, and painfully as

it

it embittered her own exiſtence, was, at once, ſo unjuſt, and ſo irrational? He was under no engagement to her; had never profeſſed for her any other ſentiments than thoſe of friendſhip, and undeſigning regard. Had ſhe any right then, either to manifeſt open blame, or cheriſh ſecret diſpleaſure? Was it not as degrading to evince ſuch unwarranted petulance, as even to betray her unreturned partiality?—She felt, ſhe acknowledged it: and firmly determined henceforward to reform her conduct; and, if not too late, once more to ſeek his *friendſhip*, though ſhe renounced all claim to his *love*.—"I owe", thought ſhe, "this effort to my own character; I owe it to Somerſet's paſt kindneſs and attention. My reſerve, my coldneſs, inexplicable to him as it muſt appear after all the confidence and cordiality I lately ſhewed him, can only tend to infuſe into his mind as unfavourable an opinion of my temper as of my heart. He can never know whence the change originated; and conſequently can never impute it to any better cauſe than verſatility and fickleneſs of diſpoſition."

In

In purſuance of theſe reflections, compoſing her countenance before ſhe deſcended to ſupper, and determining to meet Somerſet with all the friendly chearfulneſs in her power, ſhe entered the parlour ſo fully expecting to find him there, and ſo anxiouſly ſolicitous to prove the effect of her newly-adopted plan, that when ſhe found he was already gone—gone without aſking to ſee her, without leaving for her the ſlighteſt meſſage, or appearing to remember ſhe was in the houſe—her intended exertions were forgotten, her ſpirits again failed her, and heartleſs, deſponding, and afflicted, ſhe took her place in utter ſilence, and too abſent to join in the converſation, had ſhe even wiſhed it, liſtened to all Eltham's gay rattle (for he ſtill remained) with the moſt inſurmountable and involuntary gravity, and the firſt moment it was in her power, haſtened back to her own apartment.

The following day paſſed without any remarkable occurrence, unleſs the abſence of Somerſet, whom ſhe had hitherto, ſince his return from ſea, rarely omitted ſeeing or hearing from during ſome part

of

of every day, could be called ſuch. Mrs. Barclay, after ſleeping in town, returned to dinner in high ſpirits; declared ſhe had never been ſo much entertained; laughed at Clarentine for the *unaccountable* terror that had ſo ſtrangely overpowered her at the play-houſe door; and finally, received a very tart reprimand from her fair daughter, for not having ſent Mrs. Watkins's meſſenger early enough to allow of her getting to town in time to make one of their party.

The mother defended herſelf with her accuſtomed *ſang-froid*, and the daughter perſevered in her complaints with her accuſtomed querulouſneſs, till Clarentine, equally wearied of them and their ſubject, took up her work, and left them to finiſh the diſpute by themſelves.

The anxious looks of Mr. Lenham, his eagerneſs to ſpeak to her, and the manifeſt concern and diſpleaſure with which he obſerved her ſedulouſneſs to avoid it, gave her ſo much pain, and at the ſame time embarraſſed her ſo cruelly in his preſence, that towards evening, retiring for a few minutes to her own room, ſhe wrote the following note, and delivered it to him

him unperceived, as they were riſing from tea—

"To ſee you, my deareſt Sir, look ſo offended and ſo grave, occaſions me the greateſt uneaſineſs. I acknowledge that you have juſt cauſe, after what paſſed laſt night, to reſent my preſent reſerve, ſince for one who meant to ſay *no more*, I certainly then ſaid infinitely *too much:* but I ſpoke inconſiderately, and at that moment was not aware of the ſtrange confidence to which I ſeemed to be leading. Calmer reflections, dear Sir, have taught me to believe you would yourſelf diſapprove my proceeding further; and the pain that it would give to your benevolent mind, to know the true ſource of my concern without poſſeſſing the power of alleviating it, would, I am certain, induce you rather to contemn than applaud the facility with which it was revealed.

"Attempt not then, deareſt Sir, to diſcover more plainly the ſecrets of this wayward heart; diſturb not, perplex not yourſelf about me. I am unworthy, at this inſtant, of your generous attention. When time, however, ſhall have reſtored me to reaſon, and I can look back upon the events

events that are now paſſing with indifference and tranquillity, then will I, at the ſame moment that I call for your congratulations, teach you to ſmile at my former folly, and join with you in moralizing upon the inſtability, as well of human happineſs, as human ſorrow!"

This billet, though it quieted not all Mr. Lenham's uneaſy apprehenſions, ſoftened him in favour of the gentle writer, and made him cautious either of again queſtioning, or appearing to watch her. Tenderly ſolicitous to promote her happineſs, loving her as a father; and anxious by every poſſible means to avert affliction from her, it is not to be ſuppoſed, however, he could ſo eaſily relinquiſh the earneſt deſire he had to inveſtigate into a myſtery ſo alarming, and ſo extraordinary. His obſervation increaſed, therefore, with his wiſh to conceal it; and all Clarentine's future prudence, all her care and her diſcretion were ſcarcely adequate to the difficulty of evading his penetration.

She had now ſteadily adhered to her new plan of conduct for ſome days—treated Somerſet with all her former eaſe and

and complacency—revived, in ſome meaſure, his wonted chearfulneſs—reſumed her old habits—read, walked, and converſed with him, as on his firſt arrival; and, though ſhe had never yet been put to the trial, determined even when alone with him to behave with the ſame friendlineſs and unreſerve; when, one morning ſoon after breakfaſt, whilſt ſhe was ſitting by herſelf in the parlour, he unexpectedly entered, but ſtopping ſhort on perceiving her, ſeemed to heſitate a moment whether he ſhould advance, and then ſhutting the door, ſlowly approached her.—

"I have wiſhed, my dear Miſs Delmington, for ſome time," ſaid he, ſitting down by her, and after a ſhort ſilence, gravely addreſſing her, "to have a few minutes private converſation with you. Are you at leiſure now? and may I venture to ſpeak with all the ſincerity you formerly authorized?"

Clarentine, too much confounded by the ſerioufneſs of his looks and voice, and the intelligible, though gentle reproach his laſt words conveyed, to be able immediately to anſwer him, Somerſet

ſet perceiving her embarraſſment, added with a half ſmile—

"What is it, my deareſt Miſs Delmington apprehends? Does ſhe believe me ſo *very* a *cenſor* as I was deſcribed to her? Does my *auſterity* ſo much alarm her, that ſhe even fears to ſpeak to me?"

"O no, no!" cried Clarentine with quickneſs, "I am ready, I am anxious to hear, and to anſwer every queſtion you can aſk. I have no fears but of having, perhaps, of late, too juſtly merited your diſapprobation!"

"Diſcard, diſcard from your mind," cried Somerſet, earneſtly, "all ſuch vain and cauſeleſs terrors! To *diſapprove* I claim no right, even if I had the will; I am *not*, Miſs Delmington, the ſevere and arbitrary monitor you ſuſpect! Could you forget that ſuch a connection as guardian and ward ſubſiſted between us, and view me only as a brother and a friend—a friend whom in former times you uſed to truſt—a brother whom you once, I believe, loved—then ſhould I fearleſsly proceed, and frankly avow the motives that urged me to requeſt this conference."

"Proceed

"Proceed then, unheſitatingly," cried Clarentine, with warmth; "ſpeak with the certainty of being only interpreted as you could wiſh!"

Softened and delighted by this ſpeech, Somerſet appeared half tempted to imprint upon the hand he held a kiſs of gratitude, and acknowledgment. He reſtrained himſelf, however, and reſuming the diſcourſe, in a tone of more than uſual gentleneſs and kindneſs, ſaid—

"Could I deſcribe to Miſs Delmington the anxious ſolicitude with which I not only *now*, but *ever*, I have wiſhed to ſee her happy; could ſhe form any idea of the deep and animated intereſt I take in all that relates to her, the queſtion I am about to aſk would require no other apology than the affectionate ſentiment by which it is dictated; as ſhe can have no conception, however, of that ſentiment—of half its zeal and fervour—I muſt rely upon her indulgence, and the rectitude of my own intentions for pardon."

He then went on to enquire, for Clarentine was too much agitated to interrupt him,

him, with all the considerate delicacy the subject demanded, how long she had been acquainted with Mr. Eltham? What she believed were his views in coming so frequently to the house, and paying her such marked attention? and what her own opinion and designs respecting him were?

"If, my lovely friend," added he, "you have any reason to suspect him of being a mere idle *flirt*, one of those despicable and presuming coxcombs, known under the denomination of *male-coquettes*, the more speedily you authorize either Mr. Lenham or *me*, (in my formidable *capacity of Guardian*) to discard him—or, if you prefer it, the more speedily you announce to him his dismission yourself, the more just it will be to your own character. If, on the contrary, as appears far more probable, his designs are serious and honourable, and are, besides, such as you approve, and feel willing to encourage, the sooner, through the interference of some friend, he is brought to declare them"—

"The *better?* asked Clarentine, interrupting him in a faint voice, and turn-

ing extremely pale, "the better, do you think, Mr. Somerſet?"

Somerſet changed colour, looked irreſolute and diſconcerted, and caſting down his eyes, after a ſhort pauſe, replied—

"I acknowledge myſelf by no means a competent judge in this caſe either of the *better* or the *worſt*. Your own heart, Miſs Delmington, muſt determine for you; and if I have preſumed too far, I entreat your forgiveneſs; it was not, you will believe, I hope, my deſign to *dictate* its deciſion."

"O no," cried Clarentine recovering herſelf, "that I am perſuaded of!—But Sir, before we drop this ſubject—a ſubject painful to me to talk upon, and I am ſure, by no means pleaſant to you, further than as it enables you to prove your general good-wiſhes and concern for me—ſuffer me to entreat that on no account whatever *you* will ſpeak upon it to Mr. Eltham. All that I may wiſh ſhould be ſaid, I will either requeſt Mr. Lenham to repeat for me, or undertake to tell him myſelf!"

Somerſet only bowed; he ventured not to aſk what that *all* would be, neither did

he chuſe to purſue the converſation. After a ſhort interval, therefore, riſing, and taking his hat, he ſaid he was going back to town; aſked if ſhe had any commands, and on her ſaying, "none," wiſhed her good morning, and left the room.

"To what," thought Clarentine, when he was gone, "to what would this ſingular converſation tend? Does he really *wiſh* me to encourage Eltham? Were his enquiries only meant to find out my real ſentiments concerning him, or was it their aim to prove to me that he was ready to favour another's pretenſions? Incomprehenſible Somerſet! In voice, in looks, ſo tender and ſo anxious, in heart ſo regardleſs and ſo indifferent! Oh, why addreſs me in language ſo flattering, talk to me of his *ſolicitude*, his *affection*, and his zeal, and at the ſame moment, by the tranquil unconcern with which he ſhews himſelf ready to reſign me, plant a dagger in my breaſt!"

During the remainder of the day, as he appeared no more, ſhe had leiſure to deliberate with herſelf concerning the part ſhe had now to act with Eltham. Superior to all coquetry—unacquainted indeed,

indeed, but by report, either with its artifices or its nature, ſhe found no difficulty, as it was her decided wiſh to be releaſed from his aſſiduities, in coming to the reſolution of immediately putting an end to them; yet how, in her own perſon, was this to be effected? She could not tell him ſhe believed him to be in love with her—apprehended he had formed preſumptuous expectations—and thought it her duty to check them! He had never but once formally avowed himſelf—and that once, the only time his language at any period took the form of a poſitive declaration, though he had profered to her his *heart*, his *fortune*, ſworn even to dedicate his very *life* to her; his *hand*, or his *faith* had never been compriſed in the enumeration! To treat him, conſequently, as a ſerious pretender would be abſurd—would be almoſt like *aſking* for his addreſſes, and telling him they were expected. All, therefore, that ſhe had to do, was, to truſt the buſineſs to the management of Mr. Lenham; to beg him in his own name, and as if wholly at his own inſtigation, to repreſent to him the impropriety of his conſtant viſits, and to

declare to him, very poſitively, that they could no longer be permitted.—

A commiſſion Mr. Lenham would have felt himſelf more gladly diſpoſed to accept, could not have been deviſed. Eltham's wild and flighty diſpoſition; the ſelfiſhneſs, and indelicacy with which —ſolely for his own amuſement, without appearing to have any determinate object —he purſued, and trifled with a young woman not only of ſuch unimpeachable character, but alſo of ſuch reſpectable connections, and ſuch modeſt and unequivocal propriety of behaviour, had long offended him extremely; it was therefore with the utmoſt readineſs he undertook to execute the taſk aſſigned him, the very firſt time Eltham again came to the houſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

THE admiration which Miſs Barclay had conceived, even from the firſt hour ſhe beheld him, for Mr. Eltham; the veneration ſhe had for his ſplendid advantages of birth and fortune; the ſtriking ſuperiority of his faſhionable deportment, and eaſy addreſs over thoſe of every other man ſhe had till now converſed with, had ſo powerfully operated in his behalf, that, without its being neceſſary, according to Sophia's advice, for Clarentine to interfere in the buſineſs, ſhe had indulged (unchecked either by her own pride or his neglect) a very tender, though hitherto it muſt be acknowledged, very unproſperous predilection for him. The hard-hearted and perſevering indifference, however, with which ſhe daily obſerved that Clarentine received his attentions; the almoſt poſitive opinion ſhe began to entertain that even were he to offer himſelf to her ſhe would reject him, had of

late infuſed into her mind a faint hope, that, by purſuing with him the ſame conduct Mrs. Hertford had adopted with reſpect to Capt. Somerſet, ſhe might ſucceed, perhaps, in detaching him from ſo ungrateful a miſtreſs, and win him over to herſelf.

It now, therefore, became her conſtant ſtudy, by every method in her power, to attract his notice, and engage his admiration; her dreſs, her language, her attitudes, her very voice betrayed the anxiety with which ſhe not only prepared for his arrival, but ſought, when he was preſent, to make herſelf conſpicuous. Had *he* been grave and reſerved, *ſhe* would have attempted to appear ſoft and penſive—as it was, ſeeing him always eaſy and careleſs; often—to her at leaſt, —impertinent; ſometimes negligent and indolent, at others, active and animated, ſhe endeavoured to model her own character upon his, and by turns, to imitate every change that either accident or deſign produced in his behaviour.

When Clarentine was not preſent, excluſively to engroſs his attention, there were moments when, in preference to fitting

ting wholly unemployed, he would vouchſafe with an air of condeſcenſion, and frequently in the midſt of a yawn, to addreſs to her a few unmeaning and exaggerated compliments, for the mere pleaſure of ſeeing her look languiſhing and affected. Once or twice, he had even given himſelf the trouble, called upon by her repeated though indirect challenges, to romp with her; and after tearing her cloaths, tiring and overpowering her, (for on theſe occaſions he was ſeldom extremely gentle) uſed to throw himſelf into a ſeat very compoſedly, and as he lounged back in his chair amuſed himſelf with laughing at the ſtrange plight he had put her into, and the diſconſolate figure ſhe cut!

As Miſs Barclay neither poſſeſſed great refinement, nor great penetration, ſhe was as little diſpoſed to reſent his freedom, as ſhe was capable of diſcerning what his real ſentiments concerning her were. All ſhe aſpired to was his attention; and proud of obtaining it in any way whatever, to the more, or the leſs reſpect with which it came accompanied, ſhe was totally indifferent.

It was on the third day after Clarentine's little explanation with Somerſet, that at his uſual hour, juſt as the family had met to tea, Eltham, for the firſt time ſince the night he had accompanied her from town, made his appearance. The party he found aſſembled, in addition to Mr. Lenham's uſual inmates, conſiſted of Mrs. Denbigh, and Mrs. Hertford. Somerſet had been there before dinner, but went away in leſs than hour.

Clarentine's reception of him, as at all other times, was civil, but quiet and compoſed. Not ſo Miſs Barclay; her eyes danced with pleaſure the moment he entered; with an eagerneſs and officiouſneſs that made even Mrs. Hertford ſtare, ſhe drove young Blandford from the tea-table, and diſturbed every body elſe at it, to make room for him next her; looked at, ſpoke to no other perſon during the whole time he ſat by her; and in ſhort, behaved with ſuch extreme folly and forwardneſs, that Eltham, by no means the laſt to perceive it, had ſome difficulty, more than once, to forbear laughing in her face.

As ſoon as the tea-things were removed, Clarentine, who, though ſhe made it a point

point when Mrs. Barclay was alone to ſit with her in an evening, thought herſelf exempted from this neceſſity, when the contrary was the caſe, roſe to leave the room: but Eltham abruptly ſtarting up, and ſtepping between her and the door, ſaid in a low and ſupplicating voice, as ſhe ſtill advanced towards it—

"You do not mean to conſign me over to this intolerable circle the whole evening?"

"Intolerable!" repeated Clarentine in the ſame tone, "Is Mr. Lenham, is Mrs. Denbigh intolerable?"

"If they were angels," anſwered Eltham, taking her hand to lead her back, "when you are gone, I ſhall wiſh them all utterly annihilated!" then raiſing his voice, "What have you done, my dear Miſs Delmington, with your harp? Do you never play now?"

"Yes," replied Clarentine, who rather than occaſion any further contention, had walked back to her ſeat, "ſometimes."

"Suppoſe, my young friend, "ſaid Mrs. Denbigh, "you have it brought down this evening, and attempt by

" A ſolemn air, and the beſt comforter
" To an unſettled fancy,"*

to quiet and tranquillize Mr. Eltham?"

" An excellent propoſal;" cried Mrs. Hertford ſmiling, " though one that, I own, ſeems to be applying to Mr. Eltham ſomething too much of the nature of the *Tarantula!*"

" I am not," ſaid Eltham, " to be laughed out of my purpoſe; therefore, Miſs Delmington, ſuffer me to entreat you *will* ſend for it, or permit—what I ſhould ſtill prefer—my attending you to your own apartment to hear you."

" A modeſt petition, truly!" cried Miſs Barclay ſneeringly, " I hope Miſs Delmington means to comply with it."

Clarentine's only anſwer to this was a requeſt that Miſs Barclay, who ſat neareſt it, would ring the bell to order the harp down ſtairs.

It was ſoon brought; and Clarentine, who had now taken regular leſſons of a maſter for ſome time, and really played with admirable taſte and expreſſion, aſtoniſhed and charmed Eltham ſo much by

* Tempeſt.

the

the extraordinary progreſs ſhe had made ſince he laſt heard her at Sidmouth, that he would not ſuffer her to riſe, till the repeated yawns of Mrs. Barclay, and the loud talking of her daughter, warned her, by immediately ſtopping, not to lull the one to ſleep, or rouze the other to impatience.

Eltham thanked her, when ſhe got up, in the moſt animated terms, for the extreme pleaſure ſhe had given him, and was proceeding to aſk her ſome queſtions concerning the muſic ſhe had been playing, when Miſs Barclay, peeviſhly interrupting him, ſaid—

"I fancy, Mr. Eltham, you would not be ſo fond of ſuch dolorous ditties if you was'n't in love?"

Every body ſtared, and Eltham, after a moment of aſtoniſhed ſilence, ſaid with a forced ſmile—

"And who told you, my fair interrogator, that I *was* in love?"

"O Lord," cried ſhe, "we all know *that*, and with *who*, too!"

Then darting an angry glance at Clarentine, who, amazed and confounded, ſtood gravely looking at her, with her

uſual abruptneſs when any thing diſcompoſed her, ſhe left the room.

A dead ſilence ſucceeded her departure for ſome minutes; Mrs. Denbigh, however, who ſat near the fire before which Eltham was ſtanding, at length interrupted it, by ſaying to him in a low voice, and with an arch ſmile—

"If your heart was not gone already, you could have no chance of reſiſting the amiable creature who has juſt left us!"

Eltham, perfectly regardleſs of the preſence either of her mother or her friend, coolly anſwered, as he leaned gently back againſt the ſide of the chimney—

"Love is a calmer, gentler joy,
"Smooth are his looks, and ſoft his pace;
"Her Cupid is a blackguard boy,
"And runs his link full in your face!"

This ridiculous, but apt quotation, conquered the gravity not only of Mrs. Denbigh, Mrs. Hertford and Clarentine, but even of Mr. Lenham. Mrs. Barclay, however, who, though ſhe but imperfectly underſtood its direct tenour, very fully comprehended the unfortunate term *blackguard*, and felt herſelf extremely offended by it, now ſaid with great ſolemnity—

"Let

"Let me tell you, Mr. Eltham, theſe are very ſtrange liberties to take before me; I ſhould be glad to know why Lucy, though may-be ſhe *is* a little pettiſh ſometimes, ſhould be called ſuch low-lived names as them? I'm ſure ſhe's done nothing *black-guard* by you; and as for talking of *links*, I don't know what you can mean by it!"

Eltham bit his lips, and looking down as if apprehenſive his laughing eyes would betray him, ſaid with ſome heſitation—

"Upon my word, my deareſt madam, you totally miſunderſtood me. I was far from intending any improper alluſion to Miſs Barclay, be aſſured; there is nobody, I proteſt to you, that does her more juſtice—that ſees her real merit in a clearer point of view!"

"Well, well," cried Mrs. Barclay, ſomewhat appeaſed by this *very ſatisfactory* apology, "we won't ſay any more about it; I ſuppoſe you did'n't mean any harm, and I might not quite make out what you you were talking of; for, to tell you the truth, I know but little of theſe matters, and never was over and above fond of poetry and verſes in my life."

The extreme good humour and credulous ſimplicity of this ſpeech, really made Eltham half repent having ever been wicked enough to ſay any thing that would give her pain. He renewed his excuſes and his aſſurances of reſpect with infinitely more ſerioufneſs than before; and then, finding himſelf perfectly reſtored to her good graces, changed the ſubject and gave the converſation a more general turn.

When he was riſing to take leave, Mr. Lenham, authorized by an intelligent look from Clarentine, begged the favour of ſpeaking with him a few minutes in his ſtudy. Eltham, though the requeſt ſeemed to ſurprize him, immediately agreed to it, and wiſhing the ladies good night, took up his hat and followed him.

As ſoon as they were gone, Clarentine apprehenſive of ſhe knew not what, fearful of ſeeing Eltham, ſhould he, after the conference was over, again return to the parlour; half wiſhing, yet half dreading, to hear its reſult; and by no means aſſured, proud and fiery as ſhe well knew he could be, that he would not break out into ſome act of extravagance and impatience, put up her work in haſte and alarm, and flew

for

for refuge to her own room, determined not to venture down again till poſitively convinced he had left the houſe.

In leſs than half an hour, young Blandford knocked at her door to tell her Mr. Lenham was in the parlour, and ſupper was ready.

"And where is Mr. Eltham?" cried Clarentine eagerly—

"On his road to London, I ſuppoſe," anſwered Blandford—

"He is not below, then?—not in the parlour, you are ſure?"

"Yes, quite ſure; he has never been there ſince you left it."

Clarentine upon this opened her door, and telling Blandford ſhe was ready, accompanied him down ſtairs.

As ſhe entered the ſupper-room, Mr. Lenham, ſhe perceived, was walking ſlowly about it, looking unuſually grave and thoughtful. Every body elſe was ſtanding round the table waiting for him to ſit down: he ſeemed not to obſerve it, however, till Clarentine appeared, when ſilently taking her hand, he led her towards her accuſtomed ſeat, and then walked to his own.

During

During the whole time they were at table, Clarentine watched his countenance with the moſt anxious attention. By degrees the paſſing cloud that had obſcured it diſperſed; he looked up at her with his wonted friendly chearfulneſs; joined freely in the converſation, and before they roſe from ſupper ſeemed wholly to have forgotten the little chagrin he had experienced.

This change gave her inexpreſſible pleaſure; yet ſtill eager to queſtion him, contrary to her uſual cuſtom ſhe lingered below till almoſt every body had quitted the parlour, and then as he was lighting his candle to go alſo, ſoftly approached him, and ſaid in a whiſper—

"May I, dear Sir, attend you for a moment to your ſtudy?"

"Yes, certainly," replied he; and immediately went out with her.

When they were alone, "Well, Sir," cried Clarentine, heſitatingly, "how did your conference with Mr. Etham terminate? Amicably, I hope?"

"On *my* part," anſwered Mr. Lenham, "perfectly ſo; I was firm yet civil; and when I ſaw how ill his pride brooked the affront, almoſt tempted to feel ſorry for him."

Clarentine

Clarentine ſmiled—"I ſhould never have ſuppoſed," ſaid ſhe, "Mr. Lenham's pity could have been called forth by ſuch a paſſion.—But tell me, dear Sir," added ſhe more gravely, "has he promiſed to diſcontinue his viſits in future?—May I flatter myſelf his aſſiduities are entirely at an end?"

"I believe you may; but not that if he meets with either *you* or *me* in the dark, he will heſitate to cut our throats."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Clarentine, "was he then ſo *very* iraſcible?"—

"I never before ſaw a man take ſuch incredible pains to prove himſelf qualified for Bedlam or St. Luke's. He raved, he threatened, he abſolutely, I believe, ſwore! and when he had vented all his choler againſt *us*, proceeded next to utter ſuch vehement denunciations againſt the devoted Somerſet—

"Good God!" interrupted Clarentine turning pale, "againſt Captain Somerſet?"—

"Be not alarmed," reſumed Mr. Lenham ſmiling; "theſe outrageous ebullitions are never, I believe, very dangerous; were they to laſt long, they would infallibly

infallibly deſtroy the ſtrongeſt conſtitution in Chriſtendom, and Mr. Eltham knows better the value of his than to put it to ſuch riſk. After ſtorming and execrating, therefore, till he was completely tired, finding I made him no anſwer, but went on very compoſedly mending my fire, he ſat down to cool, and ended the converſation with as much temperance as I believe it is in his nature to feel."—

"In his calmer moments then, Sir," aſked Clarentine, "did he ſay any thing that diſturbed you more than in his fury? You looked, I thought, extremely vexed and ſerious when I firſt went down."

"To deal plainly with you, my dear Miſs Delmington," anſwered Mr. Lenham, "he made an appeal to my *juſtice*, towards the latter part of our conference, that embarraſſed me not a little. I had given him, tacitly at leaſt, to underſtand that *you* were unacquainted with the nature of our debate; this he ſeemed very much to doubt: but admitting it, at length, for fact, he aſked me, with all the gravity of a man who thinks himſelf highly aggrieved, whether, after the ſpecies of promiſe he had once obtained from you,

that

that when fixed in my houſe you would admit his viſits upon the footing of a friend, I thought myſelf entitled, unknown to you, to deny him this privilege? Whether, in ſhort, I thought it juſt to *him*, or honourable to *you*?"

"Mr. Eltham," cried Clarentine, a little indignantly, "is the only man breathing, I believe, who, knowing *how* and *where* that promiſe was exacted, would have ventured to ſpeak of it to you as of one that he *deſerved* ſhould be kept. It was on my journey from Sidmouth, the night I ſlept at Saliſbury, that, after having perſecuted and frightened me till I was really glad to come to any compromiſe whatever, he drew it reluctantly from me, upon condition he conſented immediately to quit me. This, at length, he did; and hitherto it has been ſolely in conſideration of that engagement, extorted as it was, I have ever permitted him to ſee me."

"All this, my dear young lady," ſaid Mr. Lenham, "I was utterly unacquainted with; conſequently, to his ſerious enquiry had very little more to ſay, than that I would ſpeak with you upon the ſubject,

ſubject, and aſk whether it was your wiſh the promiſe ſhould be continued or retracted. 'If Miſs Delmington,' added I, 'conſults *me* in this affair, I believe Mr. Eltham, you know what my advice to her will be. Should you, therefore, hear nothing further from me, I beg what I have now ſaid may be looked upon as concluſive.' Upon this he aroſe, made me a very cavalier bow, and departed."

"And peace go with him!" cried Clarentine, ſighing a weight of care off her breaſt, "I ſincerely hope, that as *my* viſitor, at leaſt, I ſhall ſee him here no more."

She then thanked Mr. Lenham for the kindneſs with which he had undertaken ſo unpleaſant a taſk, and taking leave of him for the night, retired to reſt.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

SOMERSET, diſdaining all artifice himſelf, frank, honourable, and noble-minded, ſuſpected not that it was in human nature, unleſs ſunk to the loweſt depth of depravity, to diſſemble by ſyſtem, and deceive upon principle. Clear-ſighted and diſcerning in perceiving merit, he was backward in diſcovering errors; and while it was poſſible to believe any action might have a *right* motive, obſtinate in not imputing to it a *wrong* one. In courage, in underſtanding, in fortitude a man—in heart and diſpoſition he was ſtill a child. The blunt, unpoliſhed beings with whom he had been accuſtomed to aſſociate, though they had infuſed into his character no portion of their roughneſs, had maintained in it and nouriſhed all its genuine ſimplicity; and neither taught him the neceſſity of diſguiſe, or the advantages of diſtruſt. In favour of another, whom he wiſhed to ſerve, he could be vigilant and obſervant; in all that related to himſelf he

he was credulous and unguarded. Compaſſionate, kind and friendly, whoever he ſaw unhappy he ſought to relieve; whoever he believed deſerving he ſought to conciliate.

A character thus open, thus undeſigning and liberal, it required far leſs addreſs than Mrs. Hertford poſſeſſed, to work upon and influence. Quick in penetrating every thought of his honeſt heart, and ſkilful in tracing every avenue that led to its approach, ſhe began her operations with a ſagacity, a cool deliberate policy, that might have done credit to the noble principal whoſe agent ſhe had condeſcended to become. It was not Somerſet's affection ſhe ſought, or even expected to obtain; ſhe knew too well which way the wiſhes of his ſoul pointed to have any hopes of directing them towards herſelf; the artleſs and unconſcious Clarentine--Clarentine whoſe congenial mind ſo well accorded with his own, ſhe was perſuaded engroſſed them wholly. Still, however, with ſuch a man ſhe had hopes of ſucceeding; it was yet poſſible to intereſt his compaſſion, excite his pity, though ſhe procured not his love;

and

and, as to his fortune only, his rank in life, and independance ſhe aſpired, the feelings to which ſhe might be indebted for his hand, were to her indifferent.

When at Portſmouth juſt before her marriage, ſhe had firſt ſeen him, cold-hearted, and ſelf-intereſted as ſhe was, ſhe had been unable to defend herſelf from experiencing an involuntary ſentiment of admiration in his favour. The noble, graceful, and unaffected dignity of his deportment; the intereſting expreſſion of mingled animation and ſweetneſs that characterized his countenance; the gentleneſs of his manners; the good-ſenſe, good-humour and ſpirit of his converſation, it was impoſſible wholly to diſregard. Even Mrs. Hertford felt the influence of qualities ſo amiable and ſo ſtriking; ſhe felt it, however, without any diminution of her tranquillity; and had Somerſet, at that time dependant upon a mercenary father, offered himſelf to her at the very moment her partiality for him was the greateſt, Mr. Hertford, wholly his own maſter, and ſaid to be very affluent, would have been unheſitatingly preferred.

Yet anxious to reſerve to herſelf the power, whenever Somerſet returned, of renewing her acquaintance with him—pleaſed with the proſpect, though now married, of being followed and attended by him, ſhe moſt aſſiduouſly courted, (in remembrance of their new relationſhip to Mr. Lenham, Somerſet's beſt and earlieſt friend,) the intimacy of Mrs. and Miſs Barclay, during the whole time ſhe remained in England. From them, wherever he might fix, ſhe hoped to hear of him: but long before his firſt voyage was over, thoſe hopes were for a while driven from her recollection by the alarming derangement of her huſband's affairs, and the melancholy neceſſity that drove them both to the continent.

Returning at the end of her long exile as pennyleſs, as deſtitute, as when the infatuated Hertford firſt choſe her for his ruin; diſappointed in her ambitious projects of forming a ſecond eſtabliſhment abroad, and hopeleſs among thoſe by whom ſhe was too well known to form one in England, her thoughts again reverted to that Somerſet, whom having ſeen only by accident ſhe had hitherto

ſeen

ſeen without ſerious deſign; but whom now, perſuaded he could have heard nothing of her former conduct, and aſſured ſhe could only have excited in him ſentiments that were favourable to her purpoſe, ſhe determined to purſue, and whether ſtill in expectation or already in abſolute poſſeſſion of his father's property, to captivate and conquer.

Her firſt eager enquiries after him were anſwered by Miſs Barclay, with the welcome information that his arrival was hourly looked for, and his delay extremely wondered at. The ſame letter brought her intelligence that Clarentine Delmington, the orphan relation and favorite they had both heard him ſpeak of ſo partially, was upon the point of taking up her future reſidence at her late tutor's, and meant to ſet out for Hampſtead in the courſe of a very ſhort time. She was then at Sidmouth; and Mrs. Hertford, as deſirous to conciliate her favour, as ſhe was from the ſame motives to cultivate that of the Barclays, ſought with ſuch diligent though ineffectual aſſiduity to eſtabliſh an intimacy with her, that, had ſuſpicion been a weed of native

growth in the mind of Clarentine, thoſe aſſiduities alone would have been ſufficient to have fed and cheriſhed it. Innocent, however, and candid, little as ſhe felt diſpoſed to *love* Mrs. Hertford, ſhe permitted not herſelf literally to diſtruſt her till after the firſt conference ſhe held concerning her with Eltham. Often had ſhe ſince endeavoured to eraſe that conference from her remembrance, particularly from the moment ſhe found Somerſet ſpoke favourably of her, and Mr. Lenham ſeemed to regard her with eſteem: but the palpable artifices (palpable, at leaſt, to the keen diſcriminating eye of jealouſy) with which ſhe had now during ſo many weeks ſeen her ſtudying to recommend herſelf to the one, and to conceal her deſigns from the other, had at length ſo wholly conquered Clarentine's generous ſcruples, that ſhe never beheld her without experiencing a ſenſation bordering upon diſguſt and horror.

Yet the ſucceſs that had hitherto attended Mrs. Hertford's ſchemes had neither been very flattering to her vanity, nor very chearing to her hopes; her *ſoi diſant* paſſion, though acknowledged with an

an *honeſt ſincerity* for which ſhe ſeemed to expect great credit, to its pretended object, whom ſhe found impenetrable to mere hints and looks, had till now appeared to create in him only perplexity and uneaſineſs. He frankly confeſſed to her, and *his* confeſſion *was* honeſt, that his heart was no longer his own; that he felt for her the trueſt admiration, the utmoſt gratitude and the livelieſt friendſhip; but could never hope to repay the diſtinction with which ſhe honoured him with any ſentiments more fervent. Mrs. Hertford ſighed, heard him with bluſhes and with tears; proteſted *his* happineſs was ſo much dearer to her than her *own*, that could ſhe but once ſee it ſecured ſhe cared not what fate might await her; ſupplicated the continuance of his regard, claimed even his compaſſion, and ended by declaring ſhe would never mention her unfortunate predilection to him more.

The next day, however, the day following, and every day ſhe could ſpeak to him apart, the ſame ſubject was revived, the ſame proteſtations poured forth, the ſame lamentations indulged! Somerſet, confounded, diſtreſſed, often wearied,

ſometimes anſwered her with the moſt reſpectful ſeriouſneſs, at others, gently rallied her upon the unmerited condeſcenſion with which ſhe treated him, and beſought her for both their ſakes to forbear renewing a converſation he grieved to ſay was ſo uſeleſs, and was certain muſt be ſo humiliating.

Mrs. Hertford upon theſe occaſions had the art to conceal her conſternation under the more touching ſemblance of ſorrow and deſpair. Sometimes alſo ſhe would talk to him openly of Clarentine; inſinuate that ſhe had diſcovered *her* to be the object of his attachment, and with that ſpecies of guarded warmth ſo neceſſary in order to avoid all appearance of affectation, ſpeak to him, as if involuntarily, of her beauty and her merit, and dwell with modeſt candour upon the many reaſons ſhe had to fear ſuch a rival, without being able to diſcover one that could juſtify her in ſeeking, even if ſhe had the power, to detach him from her.

Penetrated by this generoſity, charmed from whatever quarter to hear the praiſes of one his heart ſo fondly cheriſhed, Somerſet, no longer languid, no longer abſent,

ſent, liſtened with an avidity and a delight to all ſhe ſaid upon the ſubject of Clarentine, that convinced her ſagacious rival ſhe had at length diſcovered a never-failing, though a borrowed magnet of laſting attraction. The hope, towards its cloſe, of hearing that beloved name coupled with praiſe, made him patiently attend to all that in the early part of every converſation was irkſome or embarraſſing. His friendſhip, his concern for Mrs. Hertford redoubled; and as Clarentine's reſerve encreaſed, the only conſolation he ſeemed to find was in the ſympathizing pity of her gentle competitor.

It had once been Mrs. Hertford's plan to infuſe into his mind a jealous diſtruſt of Eltham; that, however, as it was impoſſible to effect it without being often ſubject to ſeeing Eltham herſelf, ſhe very ſoon relinquiſhed all idea of, dreading no one's remarks or obſervations ſo much. Arch and ſignificant as Eltham had often looked when witneſſing her attentions to Somerſet; thoughtleſs, flighty, and ungovernable as he was, he might, either deſignedly or by accident, reveal ſo many things it was her intereſt to keep

ſecret, that ſhe trembled every hour at the conſequences of his perpetual viſits. To check therefore, or, if poſſible, entirely to put an end to them, ſhe deſcribed him to Somerſet as a man, who, under the appearance of careleſs gaiety, concealed ſuch licentious principles, ſuch determined libertiniſm, that he was by no means a proper character to be admitted, where there was a young woman ſo inexperienced and attractive as Clarentine, upon ſuch familiar and intimate terms. The very partiality ſhe had, whilſt at Sidmouth, ſuſpected Clarentine to entertain for him, ſhe now changed into, what ſhe had ſince perceived it really was, embarraſſment and apprehenſion; ſpoke of the uneaſineſs ſhe was ſure his preſence often gave her with concern and pity, and urged Somerſet to conſult her upon the ſubject, and endeavour, as quietly as he could, to relieve her from ſuch weariſome importunities.

Yet whilſt thus anxious to deliver herſelf from Eltham as a ſpy upon her own actions, ſhe deeply lamented the neceſſity ſhe was under at the ſame time of removing him as a rival from Somerſet.

What

What could ſhe now hope would prevent his ſeeking an explanation with Clarentine of her late coldneſs? and when that *was* explained, what could ſhe hope would longer ſeparate and diſunite them?—Theſe queſtions were difficult to reſolve; Mrs. Hertford, however, fertile in expedients, *did* reſolve them, and fixed upon a means of diviſion ſhe wiſely concluded would be infallible.

Deeply verſed in the art of inveſtigating the characters of all thoſe whom either her intereſt or her inclination induced her to court, and equally dexterous in knowing how to ſelect from each the different qualities that could beſt be applied to her own ſervice, it was not long before, in the delicate, diſintereſted, but of late, ſomewhat irritable mind of Clarentine, ſhe diſcovered feelings upon which ſhe might as ſucceſsfully operate as upon the unſuſpecting liberality of Somerſet.

From Clarentine in perſon, then, ſhe was determined the final cruſh of Somerſet's future hopes ſhould come: but as ſhe had great reaſon to believe Eltham, finding himſelf baniſhed from her preſence

upon any other terms, would, rather than loſe her without a ſtruggle, renew his aſſiduities upon the profeſſed and honourable footing of an avowed pretender to her hand, ſhe waited to begin her machinations till ſhe ſaw whether her ſuſpicions were realized, and whether Clarentine herſelf conſented to accept him.

CHAP. XIV.

MRS. Hertford was too good a judge of the human heart to be often in danger of forming wrong concluſions. A week had ſcarcely elapſed ſince the diſmiſſion of Eltham, when one morning before Clarentine was up, the following letter from him, ſaid to be brought by one of his grooms on horſeback, was delivered to her.

MISS DELMINGTON.

"Barbarous, tyrannical and unpitying Clarentine! Tell me, was it by your ſtern decree I received ſo inſulting a prohibition? Gentle and merciful as you are

to

to others, why ever thus inexorable to me? Oh! if I dared give utterance to half my indignation againſt you—againſt the cold-blooded, phlegmatic politicians who ſurround you, how madly I could rave and imprecate!

"With a woman's form, with every attractive grace, every faſcinating charm the lovelieſt woman can boaſt, you poſſeſs, unfeeling Clarentine! the callous, the impenetrable nature of a rock! Did you even take the trouble to ſeek a *pretence* for diſcarding me? Did you by one alleviating, one warning ſentence prepare me for my doom? No; you ſtabbed me by ſurpriſe; choſe the very moment when, moſt implicitly relying upon your once promiſed confidence and friendſhip, I thought myſelf ſecure and unendangered. What a time to ſelect for ſuch a blow! It came upon me with the ſudden ſhock of an unexpected and reſiſtleſs thunder-ſtroke; and but that a *woman* was its cauſe—that a *woman's hand* directed it, ſcarce could it have appeared to me poſſible or real!

"You will tell me, perhaps—if indeed you think it worth while to attempt

any extenuation of an act ſo inhuman, that it was not performed at your inſtigation: credulity itſelf, however, could give no faith to ſuch an aſſurance. Who would, who *ought* to hazard ſo arbitrary a proceeding without your concurrence? Oh, Clarentine! I know you too well—I fear alſo I know too well the actual ſtate of your relentleſs heart, to entertain any doubt of the ready participation you gave to the whole buſineſs.

" Would to heaven I had never ſeen you! never indulged the fatal propenſity that led me to ſeek ſuch dangerous ſociety! From the hour I firſt knew you I may truly ſay I have never enjoyed a ſingle day's uninterrupted tranquillity. I am ſick of ſuch an exiſtence: and after this one, this final effort to induce you to ſoften its wretchedneſs, am determined, if it fails, to ſhun you during the remainder of my life!

" As a friend, deareſt Clarentine, you reject me; as a lover you repulſed and ſcorned me; as a protector you diſtruſted me: yet, faireſt and beſt of human beings! as a friend, a protector, a lover all in one, as the partner of your future life, the grateful

grateful ſharer of all your joys, the participator and ſoother of all your cares—as the man, in ſhort, whom the moſt indiſſoluble ties have bound to you at the altar, the moſt fervent affection attached to you for ever, will you yet, oh gentleſt Clarentine! will you yet vouchſafe to receive me?

"Artleſs and generous as you are, I know that from ſuſpenſe or delay I have nothing to apprehend: I can ſupport neither: decide then upon my fate but with the ſame mercy, you will with frankneſs; and in the happieſt of men, and the moſt ardent of admirers, expect ſoon to behold your faithful and devoted,

"GEORGE ELTHAM."

The ſurpriſe, and ſometimes even anger of Clarentine whilſt reading this ſtrange rhapſody, could only be equalled by the impatience ſhe felt to anſwer it. Riſing therefore immediately, and dreſſing herſelf in haſte, ſhe ſat down, and without a moment's deliberation wrote the following reply:

GEORGE ELTHAM, ESQ.

"You were right, Sir, in doing me the juſtice to believe, that on a ſubject

like the one upon which you have been pleaſed to addreſs me, I ſhould make it a point not to keep you an inſtant in ſuſpence.

" Accept then, Sir, my beſt thanks for the honour of your good opinion, but permit me, poſitively and for ever, to decline availing myſelf of it.

" I have the honour to be,
" Your grateful and
" Obliged humble ſervant,
" CLARENTINE DELMINGTON."

Of this anſwer, though ſhe kept no copy, it was not difficult on her deſcending to breakfaſt, and finding Mr. Lenham alone in the parlour, to give him a faithful account, at the ſame time that ſhe ſhewed him the letter that had occaſioned it.

" It is well," ſaid Mr. Lenham, returning it to her after he had read it, " it is " well and happy for this young man he has, at length, met with a friend honeſt and independent enough to give him ſuch a leſſon. Naturally arrogant, and rendered ſtill more ſo by the unlimited proſperity that has attended him through life, he

he ſeems to think the world was made to bow down before him. Pain or uneaſineſs, being almoſt a ſtranger to the very name of either, he ſupports with a proud impatience that irritates their ſmart, and gives fierceneſs rather than ſorrow to his complaints. Whilſt he could ſee you as often as he wiſhed, talk to you of his paſſion, and apprehend no other impediments to his viſits and importunities than your ſoft and gentle remonſtrances, he was happy, becauſe unreſtrained. *Your* peace, *your* tranquillity he thought not of; nor would this offer, he acknowledges it himſelf, ever have been made but to relieve his own inquietude."

"I fancy," ſaid Clarentine ſmiling, "it was his *intention* to do me a great deal of unmerited honour; ſince, having once declared himſelf, he ſeems to think that a ſufficient retribution for every offenſive and paſſionate expreſſion contained in the reſt of his letter, and dreams not of making any further apology."

Juſt then the door opened, and Mrs. and Miſs Barclay entered to breakfaſt.

It was not long now before Mrs. Hertford, having obtained information of this

whole tranſaction, begun her plan of operations.

Bringing her work one morning, as was frequently her practice, and eſtabliſhing herſelf as ſoon as breakfaſt was over in Mr. Lenham's parlour, ſhe happened accidently to be left alone with Clarentine, who, abſent and thoughtful, was leaning in unuſual inactivity over the back of a chair, oppoſite one of the windows.

After a ſhort ſilence, during which Mrs. Hertford, diſcontinuing her employment, ſat attentively obſerving her, ſhe at length ſaid, in a tone of kindneſs and concern—

"What is the matter, my dear Miſs Delmington? I have remarked for ſome time paſt with infinite regret, that the chearfulneſs and animation which diſtinguiſhed you when I firſt came hither, has totally diſappeared, and given way to an air of melancholy painful to behold."

Raiſing her eyes at the beginning of this ſpeech, but without changing her attitude, Clarentine fixed them with the moſt ſteady and unmoved compoſure upon Mrs. Hertford's face, and after a moment's pauſe replied—

"I ex-

"I expected not, madam, to have excited in your breaſt an intereſt ſo generous concerning me. You are extremely good, and I feel grateful for your enquiries, but muſt be excuſed anſwering them."

She would then have quitted the room, but Mrs. Hertford, recovering from the momentary conſternation a coldneſs ſo repulſive had occaſioned, called her back as ſhe was opening the door, and haſtily ſaid—

"Allow me, Miſs Delmington, if you are not particularly engaged this morning, to requeſt the favour of five minutes converſation with you."

Clarentine, ſtill grave and frigid, yet evidently much ſurpriſed, ſlowly turned back, and drawing a chair towards the table, ſeated herſelf without ſpeaking—

"I know not, Miſs Delmington," ſaid Mrs. Hertford, at length forcing herſelf to begin, "whether the confidence with which I am about to trouble you will appear deſerving your attention, but the predicament in which I ſtand renders it neceſſary, that, to enſure my future peace of mind, I ſhould now be explicit and unreſerved with you."

"I am

"I am ready, madam," ſaid Clarentine, involuntarily dreading ſome latent artifice, "to hear all you may wiſh to communicate."

"You are very good, and give me courage to go on. I will frankly, confeſs to you then, Miſs Delmington, that, the worth, the ſpirit, the generoſity of our mutual friend, Capt. Somerſet (*Here Clarentine turned pale and almoſt ſtarted*) has made an impreſſion upon my heart, too deep to be eaſily effaced. I knew him before my marriage, and even then, though I entertained not for him the ſame ſentiments a longer acquaintance has brought on, thought him one of the beſt and moſt amiable of men. This partiality, however, this admiration, grateful to me as it is to indulge, I have for ſome time ſtruggled anxiouſly to repreſs and conquer. A ſuſpicion—may I tell you, my ſweet friend, of what nature? a ſuſpicion the moſt agonizing and painful has haunted and purſued me, and till from your own lips I hear it refuted or confirmed, I can know neither reſt or peace."

Too

Too well foreſeeing what was coming, Clarentine abruptly aroſe, and again moving towards the door, ſaid—

"The ſuſpicions, madam, whatever they may be, which you entertain concerning me, I have no wiſh to hear explained: act therefore, I entreat, as if they had never occurred to you, and accept my beſt wiſhes for the recovery of that peace they have been the means of interrupting."

She would then, with a calm dignity that almoſt over-awed even the intrepid Mrs. Hertford, have immediately left the room, but again ſupplicating her to return, ſhe cried—

"O hear me, hear me, dear and generous Clarentine! My fate is in your hands: decide for me what it ſhall be, and keep me not longer in this torturing ſuſpenſe! Tell me," added ſhe, with quickneſs, "tell me, do you love Somerſet?"

Clarentine's cheeks glowed with reſentment, and her whole frame trembled with agitation as ſhe diſdainfully replied—

"I ſhould have hoped, Madam, that the reſerve which has hitherto ſubſiſted between us would have precluded the

poſſibility

poſſibility of your ever aſking a queſtion, which, even from a boſom-friend or a ſiſter, would be indelicate and unwarrantable."

"You will not anſwer me, then? you will not ſo much as tell me whether by accepting Somerſet's faith I wrong or—"

"Good God!" interrupted Clarentine, "do you believe, Madam, *I* would reſtrain you, *I* would withhold you? O no! If Mr. Somerſet has offered himſelf to your acceptance, if it is his deſign to become yours, make him but as happy as he is deſerving, and be aſſured I have no other wiſh."

"Excellent, noble creature!" exclaimed Mrs. Hertford with energy, "How do I honour the force of mind which can thus prompt you to renounce—"

Again Clarentine, though with leſs perturbation, interrupted her—"You have extremely miſtaken my ſentiments, Madam," ſaid ſhe, "I *renounce* nothing, for I have had no pretenſions: I exert no *force of mind*, for I have had no weakneſs to conquer. Praiſe ſo humiliating, therefore, I muſt requeſt to be ſpared."

"You

"You amaze and you delight me!" cried Mrs. Hertford. "So wholly, indeed, had I miſtaken you, that, attributing as well your late depreſſion as your refuſal of Mr. Eltham to the ſame cauſe, hoping to ſerve you, I ventured, however cautiouſly, to inſinuate my ſuſpicions to—Somerſet himſelf."

With a ſtart that was almoſt frantic, and a look at once wild and indignant, Clarentine tremulouſly repeated—

"To *Somerſet!* you had the cruelty, the unfeminine, mercileſs cruelty to repeat ſuch conjectures to *Somerſet!* oh ſpeak," added ſhe with quickneſs, "tell me, did he *believe* you?"

"Capt. Somerſet," replied Mrs. Hertford, "is the leaſt vain of any man I know: he might have his doubts, but—

"Oh heavens!" exclaimed Clarentine, ſinking upon a chair, and covering her face with her handkerchief, in an agony of ſhame and mortification, "What is it you have done! why raiſe ſuch inſulting doubts? You have ruined, you have wilfully and irreparably injured me, and never more, if I can avoid it, will I ſee either Somerſet or you!"

She

She was then, half diſtracted, hurrying out of the room, but ſtopping ſhort at the door, and looking round—

"Tell him," cried ſhe, ſpeaking with equal haſte and emotion, "tell him, at leaſt, when you are married, and I am gone from this hateful place, how little you were juſtified in forming ſuch ſuſpicions! whatever love, whatever friendſhip I once felt for him is now all converted into horror!"

She then ruſhed out of the room.

Mrs. Hertford, aſſured her labour was now completed, and fearful, if Clarentine was ſeen in her preſent agitated ſtate, of being ſuſpected as its cauſe, ſoon after collected her work, and telling the maid at the door ſhe had ſuddenly remembered ſome buſineſs that called her home, left her compliments to the ladies, and quitted the houſe.

The deteſtible inſinuation ſhe had ſo unfeelingly perſuaded her unhappy victim had eſcaped her, it was nothing leſs than true ſhe had ever dreamed of uttering; ſhe knew too well the effect it would have upon the enraptured Somerſet to venture ſo dangerous and unneceſſary an experiment,

ment, and perfectly convinced Clarentine's pride and indignation would be such as to lead her now most anxiously to shun every opportunity of being alone with him, she rested secure in the firm belief they would come to no explanation, but with encreased reserve continue, one from consciousness, the other from mortification, to avoid all occasions of being together.

In this opinion she was completely justified by the event. Clarentine, whose passions, either of sorrow or of anger, when they were once thoroughly roused, the keenness of her sensibility rendered it extremely difficult for her to subdue, had been so deeply hurt by the scene of the morning, and still felt herself so disturbed and irritated, that, when she received the usual summons to dinner, hearing Somerset, at whose very name she shuddered, was below, she pleaded indisposition in excuse for not going down.

In a few moments Mr. Lenham, ever kind and attentive, was at her door to enquire personally after her.

She went to him the instant she heard his voice, and affecting to speak with chearfulness

chearfulneſs, made light of her complaint, entreated him to go back to the family, and to quiet his own apprehenſions about her.

"I ſhall be well, dear Sir, in the evening," added ſhe, forcing a ſmile, "and hope to be able to keep my engagement with Mrs. Denbigh, at whoſe houſe I promiſed to drink tea."

Somewhat re-aſſured by the compoſed and tranquil tone in which ſhe compelled herſelf to anſwer him, Mr. Lenham, telling her her dinner ſhould be immediately ſent up, then left her, and returned to the parlour.

There had been a time when Somerſet, open and undiſguiſed, attached to her by every tie of gratitude and of love, would have permitted no conſideration, on hearing Clarentine was ill, to have prevented his flying with anxious precipitation to ſooth and, if poſſible, mitigate her ſufferings. That time was paſſed: it was long ſince, in the favorite retreat he had taken ſuch delight in decorating for her, Clarentine, by one encouraging look or ſmile, had granted him admittance. Checked by her own coldneſs,

which, tho' within a few days it had begun to abate, he ſtill remembered with a mixture of ſorrow and of pride, all that animated ſenſibility with which he had formerly addreſſed her, with which he had ſpoken, not only *of* her, but *to* her, had been ſucceeded by a ſtudied, diſtant civility of behaviour, equally well calculated to conceal his real ſentiments from others, and from herſelf.

The firſt emotion and alarm, therefore, which the report of her indiſpoſition involuntarily led him to betray, having ſubſided, upon hearing Mr. Lenham had ſeen, and found her better than he expected, during the reſt of the day he carefully avoided mentioning her name, and affected, though with but little ſucceſs, to diſcourſe upon general ſubjects with the ſame eaſe and calmneſs as uſual.

Meanwhile Clarentine, eager to get out of the reach, as well of Mr. Lenham's enquiries, as Somerſet's dreaded preſence, ſtole down the ſtairs as ſoftly as ſhe could when the hour was come at which ſhe was accuſtomed to repair to Mrs. Denbigh's, and taking one of the maids with her, let herſelf out at the garden

garden gate, to avoid being ſeen from the parlour windows, and proceeding lightly forward, ſoon reached that Lady's houſe.

It was no difficult taſk for Mrs. Denbigh, ſagacious and penetrating as ſhe was, to diſcover in the looks and voice of her young friend, the moſt manifeſt ſymptoms of perturbation and uneaſineſs. Clarentine's countenance was one of thoſe, which, ingenuous and expreſſive, it was as eaſy to read as to underſtand; and though ſince the morning ſhe had not ſhed one tear, heaved one ſigh, or given way to any feelings but of indignation and reſentment, her eyes looked ſo heavy, her heart ſeemed ſo oppreſſed, and ſhe ſpoke with ſuch unuſual rapidity and incoherence, that, almoſt frightened to behold her, Mrs. Denbigh, after a ſhort and anxious examination, earneſtly called out—

"My dear child, in the name of heaven! what has happened to you? Why do you look thus ſtrange and thus diſturbed?"

This eager enquiry ſhocked and ſurpriſed Clarentine ſo much, that, ſtaring at her at firſt without being able to anſwer

ſwer it, ſhe at length, in a heſitating and inarticulate voice, ſaid—

"Happened, my dear madam?—Nothing—what *ſhould* have happened?"

"Something no leſs extraordinary than terrible, if I may believe your countenance," replied Mrs. Denbigh. "Have you had any letters? any unexpected bad news?"

Too artleſs and candid long to elude ſuch friendly urgency, Clarentine's burſting heart now found a relief, no leſs ſeaſonable than conſolatory, in pouring out all its grief into the ſympathiſing and indulgent boſom of Mrs. Denbigh. It was ſo long ſince ſhe had pined, vainly pined, for ſome one in whom, unchecked by prudence or apprehenſion, ſhe might ſecurely confide, that, ſoothed and melted by the gentleneſs and compaſſion that was ſhewn her, every iraſcible paſſion by which ſhe had been torn ſubſided, and gave place to a gratitude the moſt fervent, and a ſenſibility the moſt unreſtrained.

When her firſt emotion, however, had abated, and the tears ſhe had ſo abundantly ſhed ceaſed to flow, Mrs. Denbigh taking her hand, and addreſſing her

in a tone of mixed pleaſantry and ſerioufneſs, ſaid—

"Tender and affectionate as I have long believed you, my deareſt Clarentine, I never ſuſpected till this moment, that, to ſo much ſoftneſs, your little heart united ſo much pride; you muſt curb it, my young friend, by every effort in your power, or greatly do I fear, that of the moſt benevolent and candid of human beings, it will teach you to become the moſt unjuſt and illiberal.

"Deareſt Madam"—exclaimed Clarentine, with diſmay—

"Nay, be not *very* ſeriouſly frightened," reſumed Mrs. Denbigh, ſmiling; "what I ſaid was more meant as a caution than a reproach. I would not hurt, I would not deſignedly offend you for the world, yet, my beſt Clarentine, is there not ſomething a little petulant and haſty in the anger with which you permit yourſelf to ſpeak of Mrs. Hertford? Allowing that her regard for Captain Somerſet claſhes with your own; that ſhe has unadviſedly given him to underſtand more of your partiality in his favour than you could wiſh; ſtill, however, I ſee not

in either caſe any reaſon ſo ſeverely to blame her. Let *your own* ſuſceptibility be an apology for *hers*; and as for the diſcloſure ſhe made to him, imprudent as it was, its *motives* at leaſt could only be ſuch as to do honour to her heart."

Clarentine, with a look of incredulity, and a ſmile of involuntary contempt, would here have interrupted her, but Mrs. Denbigh not allowing her time, ſomewhat gravely added—

"Young as you are, my dear Miſs Delmington, theſe deep-rooted prejudices ſhould not be cheriſhed; ſince, if ſuch is *now* their force, when time adds experience to natural diſtruſt, what will be their bitterneſs? Oh, let not then a tendency ſo unamiable ſully the guileleſs and youthful ſimplicity of your character! Be not only virtuous and deſerving in yourſelf, but cultivate with care that generous and noble diſpoſition, which ſhould lead all whoſe own hearts are pure to believe well of others."

Clarentine could bear no more—

"Oh, Madam," cried ſhe with earneſtneſs, "what dreadful prepoſſeſſion are you

yourſelf conceiving againſt me! Am I, indeed, ſo loſt to all ſenſe of candour and juſtice as you deſcribe? Do I appear ſo *very* illiberal, ſo *very* ſevere as to require ſuch a reproof? Oh, believe me, the unfavourable opinion I have thus unguardedly betrayed of Mrs. Hertford is not the mere reſult of ſudden reſentment, or groundleſs conjecture! I intended inviolably to have kept ſecret all I had ever heard concerning her, but you now *compel* me, in my own vindication, to ſpeak openly."

She then very circumſtantially repeated every particular which had tended to infuſe ſuſpicion into her mind whilſt at Sidmouth; ſpoke of the myſterious hints that Eltham had there dropped relating to her, the caution her earneſt interrogations had drawn from him, the ſtrange and ſignificant looks with which he had always talked of her; and laſtly, of the free and contemptuous ſtyle in which he had allowed himſelf perſonally to addreſs her.

Mrs. Denbigh liſtened to all theſe circumſtances with an air of ſurpriſe which plainly ſhewed, that had ſhe depended leſs implicitly upon the veracity of the relator,

relator, ſhe would have been tempted wholly to diſcredit them.

"*The greateſt proof of art*," it has been ſaid, "*is to conceal art.*" and this Mrs. Hertford had ſo ſucceſsfully accompliſhed, that, far from having ever appeared in Mrs. Denbigh's eyes as a woman of deſign or contrivance, ſhe had rather impoſed herſelf upon her as one of volatility and thoughtleſſneſs, who to a great deal of levity added quick parts, but neither depth enough to be capable of regular ſtratagem, or ſteadineſs ſufficient to apply her underſtanding to purpoſes of utility. What the qualities of her heart might be, ſhe had found no opportunity of ſeriouſly inveſtigating: concluding them, however, to be rather benevolent than otherwiſe, from her conſtant readineſs to oblige and her never-failing good-humour, ſhe had always ſeen her without diſtruſt, and converſed with her without reſerve.

Theſe being her ſentiments, when Clarentine pauſed, Mrs. Denbigh frankly avowed them, adding,

"Upon the opinion of ſuch a man as Mr. Eltham, careleſs and inconſiderate as, without a doubt, *he* is, I can conſe-

quently put but little reliance. Mrs. Hertford, though now I believe ſhe is ſeriouſly attached, once appeared to me, and formerly unqueſtionably was, a giddy, vain coquette, fond of admiration, and delighting in new conqueſts: Mr. Eltham himſelf poſſeſſed much the ſame turn of mind; and theſe two, playing upon each other, with identical weapons, may very probably have had ſome little difference, the gentleman's *proud ſtomach* knows not, even yet, how to digeſt. If he really thought *her* more to blame than *himſelf*, there was nothing diſhonourable in his guardedly cautioning you againſt her: yet, from an adviſer ſo ill qualified for the taſk, I would not, Miſs Delmington, too readily imbibe injurious ſurmiſes."

"Well Madam," cried Clarentine, "further than this, I will ſay no more upon the ſubject: it is equally impoſſible for me either to *forget* or not to *feel*; I am convinced, therefore, that as long as I remain in Mrs. Hertford's vicinity, thinking of her as I *muſt* think, and ſuffering by her as I *muſt* ſuffer, I can enjoy no eaſe or comfort. Where I can go I know not, but from Mr. Lenham's houſe during

during the preſent poſture of affairs I am determined to remove!"

"Are you ſerious," cried Mrs. Denbigh, with much aſtoniſhment. "I never was more ſo," anſwered Clarentine firmly.

Mrs. Denbigh after this was ſilent a few minutes; but at length, addreſſing Clarentine again, and with the utmoſt kindneſs, ſhe ſaid—

"If ſuch, my deareſt Miſs Delmington, is your decided reſolution, far from attempting to diſſuade you from it, I will rather endeavour to make my own advantage of it. You ſay, that, at this moment you have fixed upon no particular place to repair to: I am myſelf, in a very ſhort time, going to Bath: but as motives of friendſhip alone will lead me there, and I expect not to viſit or be viſited by more than one family in the place, its being ſo *early* or ſo *late*, (I know not which to call it) in the ſeaſon, is to me perfectly immaterial: will it be ſo, however, to *you*, my young friend, and can you voluntarily conſent to ſhut yourſelf up, perhaps during ſix weeks, with ſo peeviſh an old moralizer?"

"Ah,

"Ah, Madam!" cried the delighted Clarentine—"if I could but flatter myſelf you were indeed ſerious in making me ſuch a propoſal! but it cannot be: it would render me *too* happy, and happineſs and I ſeem deſtined to be great ſtrangers!"

Mrs. Denbigh, much affected by the purport of this ſpeech, after aſſuring her in the moſt friendly terms ſhe had never made an offer ſhe ſo ſincerely wiſhed might be accepted, attempted to reanimate her courage and cheer her hopes.

"It is too ſoon for you yet, my Clarentine," ſaid ſhe, "to admit laſting ſorrow or deſpondence into your breaſt. The world is all before you, a world into which you have hitherto ſcarcely taken more than a ſtolen glance: many, many are the comforts, the felicities I hope, it has ſtill in reſerve for you. Your own merit will make you friends; your independance enſure you reſpect; and the goodneſs and purity of your heart beſtow upon you internal approbation. With ſuch proſpects, ſuch health, ſuch innocence and youth, why, then, my deareſt girl,

girl, why give way to this vain and thankleſs dejection!"

"Ah! believe me, Madam," anſwered Clarentine, the tears once more gliſtening in her eyes—"I have *not* given way to it! No day has now ever paſſed for many weeks that I have not ſtrained every nerve to appear chearful, even when my heart has been moſt oppreſſed; and tho' often wiſhing to indulge reflection, often wiſhing to be alone, I have yet always forced myſelf into occupation or ſociety."

"In both," ſaid Mrs. Denbigh, "you were wiſe and right: perſevere, then, my gentle friend, in the ſame courſe, and doubt not but that, in a very ſhort time, your virtuous efforts will be proſperous and ſucceſsful."

She then reverted to the ſubject of their meditated journey, which ſhe told her it had been her deſign to begin in about a week, but that, if it was her wiſh, and Mr. Lenham made no oppoſition to it, ſhe would accelerate her departure without heſitation, and prepare every thing in order to ſet out in three days.

Clarentine was very grateful for this ſecond offer, and very deſirous, on finding

ing it really put Mrs. Denbigh to no ſerious inconvenience, of accepting it. They mutually agreed, therefore, to be ready early on the following Tueſday: and then Clarentine, all thanks and acknowledgments, and Mrs. Denbigh all benevolent kindneſs, ſeparated for the evening.

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END OF VOL. II.

ERRATA to VOL. II.

Page 7, line 18, *for* en, *read* ſa. Page 9, l. 3, *after* repairs *add* and. Ib. l. 4, *after* friend *add* was. Page 35, l. 23, *for* Sophia, *r.* Sophie. Page 36, l. 7, *for* Sophia, again, *r.* Sophie. Page 72, l. 22, *for* you, *r.* I. Page 79, l. 16, *after* doubts *add* were. Page 93, l. 7, *for* inmate, *r.* intimate. Page 103, l, 1, after fixing *add* his eyes on. Page 129, l. 21, *for* introducing, *r.* introduction. Page 148, l. 8, *after* entertainment, *dele* had. Page 154, l. 22, *for* viſible, *r.* riſible. Page 173, l. 19, *for* began, *r.* begin. Page 183, l. 19, *for* her, *r.* Miſs Delmington. Page 216, l 10, *after* declared *add* herſelf. Page 225, l. 18, *for* intentions, *r.* intention. Page 242, l 8, *for* would, *r.* could. Page 252, l. 14, *for* gently, *r.* negligently. Page 264, l. 7, *for* new, *r.* near. Page 26 , l. 19, *after* at, *r.* his. Page 273, l. 13, *after* will, *dele* with. Page 284, laſt line, *after* her, *dele* own.